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AND

HUTCHESON.

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*ENGLISH PHILOSOPHERS*

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SHAFTESBURY

AND

HUTCHESON

BY

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## P R E F A C E.

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THERE are no two of the better-known English Philosophers whose writings are so closely related as those of Shaftesbury and Hutcheson. It is, therefore, appropriate that they should both be noticed in the same volume.

The Life of Shaftesbury, which appears in this work, is the most detailed which has yet been published. It is mainly taken from original documents contained among the Shaftesbury Papers in the Public Record Office. The authorities for my statements are almost invariably given. My warmest thanks are due to Mr. Noel Sainsbury for the valuable information and the efficient assistance which he constantly afforded to me during the progress of this part of my book. His well-arranged catalogue of the Shaftesbury Papers has now rendered this most important series of documents easily accessible to the student of history. It is also a great pleasure to me to take this opportunity of expressing my gratitude to Mr. Garnett of the British Museum, who is always ready to give every assistance and facility to any one engaged in

serious study in the Museum. It is to him that I owe my knowledge of several manuscripts in the British Museum, bearing on Shaftesbury's life or writings.

I have also to express my thanks to the Publishers of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* for their courtesy in permitting me to make use of my article on Hutcheson, already published in the *Encyclopædia*. The four chapters, however, on Hutcheson, contained in this volume, embody much more matter, and are, in every way, more complete, than my article, which was necessarily composed with a view to condensation.

*C. C. C. Oxford, March 20, 1882.*

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# SHAFTESBURY.

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## CHAPTER I.

### LIFE AND CHARACTER.

THE printed materials for a Life of Shaftesbury are somewhat scanty. They consist mainly of his published letters, of the account of him in the *General Dictionary*<sup>1</sup> by Dr. Thomas Birch, subsequently editor of Bacon's works, a writer and compiler of considerable reputation in his day, and, lastly, of Toland's Introduction to *Letters from the late Earl of Shaftesbury to Robert Molesworth, Esq.* This last work was published, without the permission either of Lord Molesworth, the donor of the letters, or of Shaftesbury's family, who, considering the character of the contents, were naturally very indignant at their premature publication. I shall recur hereafter to this subject, but I mention the circumstance at once,

<sup>1</sup> The *General Dictionary* (1734-41) is founded on the *Dictionary* of Bayle, but contains many additional lives. The principal contributors are J. P. Bernard, T. Birch, and J. Lockman. The original papers from which Dr. Birch's Life of Shaftesbury was printed are contained in the Birch MSS. in the British Museum, No. 4254. Two letters which passed between him and the Fourth Earl, showing that the Life in the *General Dictionary* was not only extracted from the MS. Life written by the Fourth Earl (see below) but also revised by him, are contained in No. 4318 of the same collection. It is very curious that Dr. Birch makes no acknowledgments to the Fourth Earl in his printed Life. Probably, for some reason or other, he had been requested not to do so.

because I think that the indignation of Shaftesbury's family and friends at the behaviour of Toland should lead us to view with some misgiving the unqualified condemnation of the "Introduction" expressed by Dr. Birch, who describes it as "chiefly founded on conjecture," and containing "many things absolutely false." As the document must, however, be regarded with suspicion, I shall never use it as an authority, without expressly citing it.

I have been able, however, by means of the Shaftesbury Papers, now deposited in the Record Office, and admirably arranged and catalogued by Mr. Noel Sainsbury, both to check and to supplement the printed authorities. The papers relating to the Third Earl of Shaftesbury, which are very numerous, and would, I think, well repay a more careful investigation than that which I have been able to give to them, include, besides many letters and memoranda, two lives of him, composed by his son, the Fourth Earl. One of these is a rough draft in the handwriting of the Fourth Earl, accompanied by several loose papers, on which are written still rougher drafts of sentences or paragraphs; the other a fair copy, occasionally omitting, however, passages or clauses of interest which are contained in the other manuscripts. The fair copy is evidently the original of the Life in the *General Dictionary*, which usually reproduces it word for word, though several portions of the Earl's account are omitted in the printed biography, and sometimes small details are supplied by Dr. Birch which are not in the original. It would be needlessly tedious, in the following sketch, to discriminate the various authorities for each minute particular; but, speaking generally, it may be understood that, when not otherwise stated, I am following the account of Dr. Birch as extracted from the fair copy of the Life written by the Fourth Earl. This sketch of his Father's Life, says its author, "was

once intended to have been prefixed to a new edition of the *Characteristics*, though, upon considering further on it, that thought was laid aside. For the lives of persons who spend most of their time in study can never afford matter to enliven a narrative." We, at this distance of time, can only regret that the writer was so modest and reticent as not to leave us still further details of his father's life and character.

Anthony Ashley Cooper, the third Earl of Shaftesbury was born at Exeter House in London, February 26, 1670-1. He was grandson of the celebrated and unfortunate Earl of Shaftesbury, who was Lord High Chancellor of England in the time of Charles II., and son of the second Earl by the Lady Dorothy Manners, daughter of John Earl of Rutland. The marriage between his father and mother, the father being then only seventeen years of age, had been negotiated by no less a person than John Locke, who was a trusted friend of the first Earl of Shaftesbury, and long an inmate of his house. The story is told, with some little exaggerations towards the close of the narrative, by the subject of the present memoir. "My father was an only child, and of no firm health; which induced my grandfather, in concern for his family, to think of marrying him as soon as possible. He was too young and inexperienced to choose a wife for himself, and my grandfather too much in business to choose one for him. The affair was nice, for, though my grandfather required not a great fortune, he insisted on good blood, good person and constitution, and, above all, good education and a character as remote as possible from that of Court- or Town-bred Lady. All this was thrown upon Mr. Lock, who, being already so good a judge of men, my grandfather doubted not of his equal judgment in women. He departed

from him, entrusted and sworn, as Abraham's head-servant that ruled over all that he had, and went into a far country (the North of England) to seek for his son a wife whom he as successfully found."<sup>2</sup> Locke's commission, however, was not quite of the roving character here represented. It was definitely to the Earl of Rutland's at Belvoir Castle, whither he accompanied his pupil, then Mr. Ashley, in the summer of 1669, and where he seems to have brought the negotiations to a successful issue. This second Lord Shaftesbury appears to have been a poor creature, both physically and mentally; "born a shapeless lump, like anarchy," according to what is doubtless the overwrought metaphor of Dryden. Any way, according to the testimony even of the Fourth Earl, as contained in the rough draft of the *Life*, he "was confined almost altogether within doors," and, when a man, was still suffering from the medical treatment he had received for "a disorder he had fallen into, when but fifteen years old." At the early age of three, his son was made over to the formal guardianship of the grandfather. Locke, who, in his capacity of medical attendant to the Ashley household, had already assisted in bringing the boy into the world, though not his instructor, was entrusted with the superintendence of his education. The care of the philosopher was extended to his health and bodily training as well as to his mental development. And, if Shaftesbury's memory did not deceive him, when writing in middle life, it was afterwards shared in by his six brothers and sisters. The letter 'already quoted, proceeds: "Of her" (the wife whom Locke "successfully found") "I and six more of us, brothers and sisters, were

<sup>2</sup> Letter from the Third Earl of Shaftesbury to Le Clerc, preserved in the Remonstrants' Library at Amsterdam. This letter was published in *Notes and Queries*, First Series, vol. iii. pp. 97—99. There are two copies of it amongst the Shaftesbury Papers in the Record Office (Bundle 22, Letter Books 2 and 5).

born; in whose education Mr. Locke governed according to his own principles (since published by him) and with such success that we all of us came to full years, with strong and healthy constitutions: my own the worst, though never faulty till of late. I was his more peculiar charge, being, as eldest son, taken by my grandfather and bred under his immediate care: Mr. Lock having the absolute direction of my education, and to whom, next my immediate parents, as I must own the greatest obligation, so I have ever preserved the highest gratitude and duty." A few lines lower, Shaftesbury styles Locke his "friend and foster-father," though this sentiment did not prevent him, as we shall hereafter see, from severely criticising the principles of Locke's philosophy. The actual instruction was given, not by Locke, but by a Mrs. Elizabeth Birch, daughter of a schoolmaster in Oxfordshire or Berkshire. This lady, who was a proficient in the learned languages, pursued Locke's method of teaching Latin and Greek conversationally,<sup>3</sup> and that with such success that, at the age of eleven, it is said, on the authority of his son, young Ashley could read both languages with ease. During part of this time, the governess and her pupil were established in a separate house at Clapham. At the age of eleven, Anthony Ashley was sent to a private school, where he remained till his grandfather's death. In November, 1683, some months after that event, "his father carried him to Winchester," and entered him there as a Warden's boarder. In addition to the rough manners, which were common to the English public schools at that time, and which must have been specially repulsive to a shy, retiring boy, like young Ashley, both masters and boys seem to have been addicted to hard drinking.<sup>4</sup> His

<sup>3</sup> See Locke's *Thoughts concerning Education*, §§ 162, 163.

<sup>4</sup> A deplorable account of the school is given in a letter written by

residence at Winchester, however, was prematurely cut short. The boys appear to have taunted him with the opinions and fate of his grandfather, and, rendered miserable by this treatment, he left school in 1686 for a course of foreign travel. His new tutor was Mr. Daniel Denoue, a Scotchman, "a very ingenious honest person," and his travelling-companions Sir John Cropley (with whom he kept up an uninterrupted friendship to the end of his life) and Mr. Thomas Sclater Bacon. This change was probably fortunate for his mental development, as he was thus brought into direct contact with those artistic and classical associations which afterwards exercised so marked an influence on his character and opinions. "My Father," says the Fourth Earl, "spent a considerable time in Italy, where he acquired a great knowledge in the Polite Arts. That he had a sound judgment in Painting the treatises he wrote on that subject plainly evince. He understood Sculpture also extremely well, and could himself design to some degree of perfection. Of the rudiments of Music too he was not ignorant, and his thoughts concerning it have been approved by the greatest masters in that science. He made it his endeavour, while abroad, to apply himself as much as possible to the improving those accomplishments, and for that reason did not greatly seek the conversation of other English young gentlemen on their travels." A youth on his travels, who had imbibed Shaftesbury's tastes, would probably, not even now, be much attracted by the society and conversation of his contemporaries, and the English public-school education of those days probably left fewer traces of culture, and inspired boys

Lord Ashley to his father, on what seemed to be the hopeless case of his brother Maurice, in July, 1689. A copy of the letter is contained in an Entry Book, marked No. 2, in Bundle 22 of the Shaftesbury Papers in the Record Office.

less with the love of letters, than it does even in our own. But what Shaftesbury (or, as I ought rather to call him at this period of his life, Lord Ashley) failed to find among the young men of his own age, he seems to have been fortunate enough to meet with amongst their tutors. With them, even when he could not learn anything from them, he could at least converse on congenial topics. It must not, however, be inferred from this account that young Ashley was what we should now call a milksop or a prig. "His learning," says his son, speaking of a somewhat later period in his life, "though very extensive, was of an ingenious gentleman-like sort, without any mixture of pedantry or conceit." He spoke French so fluently, and with so perfect an accent, that, in France, he was often mistaken for a native; "and the ease and agility he showed in performing those exercises, in which that nation excel, contributed to the leading them into that opinion."

In 1689, the year after the Revolution, Lord Ashley returned to England, and might at once have been returned to Parliament for one of those boroughs in which his family had an interest.<sup>5</sup> He preferred, however, for the present, to devote himself to study, and, for nearly five years from this time, he appears to have led a quiet, uneventful, and studious life. There can be no doubt that the greater part of his attention was directed to the perusal of those classical authors, and to the attempt to realize the true spirit of that classical antiquity, for which he had conceived so ardent a passion.

<sup>5</sup> It was not till a few years later that an Act of Parliament (7 and 8 Will. III. c. 25, s. 8) was passed, disqualifying minors from being elected to the House of Commons. Even after this time, however, they sometimes sat by connivance, as, for instance, Charles James Fox for Midhurst and Lord John Russell for Tavistock. See Sir Erskine May's *Law of Parliament*.

"Perhaps no modern," says Toland in his Introduction, "ever turned the Ancients more into sap and blood, as they say, than he. Their doctrines he understood as well as themselves, and their virtues he practised better." He had no intention, however, of becoming a recluse, or of permanently holding himself aloof from public life. "But he admired in them nothing so much," proceeds Toland, "as that Love of one's Country, that passion for true Freedom, which they perpetually inspire, and of which they afford such numerous examples." Accordingly, on the death of Sir John Trenchard the member for Poole, he availed himself of the opportunity of entering Parliament, and was returned for that borough, May 21, 1695. This Parliament was dissolved in October of the same year, but Lord Ashley was, as a matter of course, again returned for Poole in the new Parliament which met in November. He soon found occasion for asserting that "passion for true freedom," of which Toland speaks in connexion with his study of the classics. The Bill for regulating Trials in cases of Treason, which had been dropped, in consequence of differences between the Lords and Commons, in 1691, was re-introduced early in the first session of the new Parliament. One of its provisions was that a person indicted for treason or misprison of treason should be allowed the assistance of Counsel. Lord Ashley rose, in his place in the House of Commons, to speak in favour of the Bill. But so overcome was he by shyness and natural modesty, that, according to the account given by his son, he "could not utter a syllable of what he intended, by which he found how true Mr. Lock's caution to him had been not to engage at first setting out in an undertaking of difficulty but to rise to it gradually."<sup>6</sup> He soon recovered himself, however, suffi-

<sup>6</sup> This is much the same advice which Locke subsequently gave to his young cousin, Peter King, who afterwards became Lord King and Lord



ciently to take advantage of the situation, and, with more effect than if he had made the most eloquent speech, he simply said, before sitting down : " If I, sir, who rise only to speak my opinion on the bill now depending, am so confounded, that I am unable to express the least of what I proposed to say ; what must the condition of that man be, who is pleading for his life without any assistance and under apprehensions of being deprived of it ? " " The sudden turn of thought," proceeds the Fourth Earl, " which by some was imagined to have been premeditated, though it really was as I mentioned, pleased the House extremely ; and, it is generally believed, carried a greater weight than any of the arguments which were offered in favour of the bill." <sup>7</sup> The Bill passed the Commons on Dec. 18, 1695, and, after the insertion of the Lords' Amendments, was at length agreed to by the Upper House. Another Bill, in which Lord Ashley took an interest, was one imposing a property qualification on Members of Parliament, and incapacitating electors who were guilty

Chancellor : " I cannot forbear saying this much to you, that when you first open your mouth at the bar, it should be in some easy plain matter that you are perfectly master of." Locke to King, June 27, 1698, printed in Lord Campbell's *Lives of the Chancellors*.

<sup>7</sup> This story is told of Charles Montague, subsequently Earl of Halifax, in a *Life of Halifax* (p. 30), published in 1715, and is repeated of him by Johnson in the *Lives of the Poets*. The Fourth Earl does not seem to be aware that it had been told of any one but his father, but Dr. Birch adds a reference to the *Life of Halifax*, and says the story " has been erroneously related of that Earl." If we may judge from internal evidence, it is far more appropriate to a shy and retiring man, new to Parliamentary life, like Lord Ashley, than to a practised speaker and debater, like Montague, who had sat in the House of Commons from the Convention of 1688-9 onwards. I may add that the story is related with much detail by the Fourth Earl of his father (" he had prepared a speech which those he showed it to thought a very proper one upon the occasion,"), and that in Horace Walpole's *Catalogue of Royal and Noble Authors* it is told of Shaftesbury and not of Halifax.

of corruption or treating. In a letter to Thomas Stringer, who had been his grandfather's steward, dated Feb. 15, 1695 (that is, 1696 N.S.), he complains bitterly of the party spirit which was then so rampant in the House, and of the treatment received by any member who asserted his independence. "You could, I believe, scarcely imagine with yourself, who these are in the world, or who they are in the House, who oppose this and all other such bills as this might and main; and who they are that are condemned for flying in the face of the government, as they call it, by being for such things as these are, and pressing such hard things on the prerogative or court. In short, you would hardly believe that your poor friend, that now writes to you, has sentence (and bitter sentence too) every day passing upon him, for going, as you may be sure he goes and ever will go on such occasions as these; whatever party it be that is in or out at court, that is in possession of the places and afraid of losing their daily bread by not being servile enough, or that are out of places and think, by crossing the court and siding with good and popular things against it, to get into those places of profit and management."<sup>s</sup> Throughout this Parliament, Ashley seems to have adopted a thoroughly independent line of action. His motto was emphatically "Measures not men." Though, in the strictest sense of the term, a Whig, alike by descent, by education, and by conviction, he was always ready to support any measures, from whatever quarter they came, whether from Somers or Montague, or from Godolphin or Harley, provided that they appeared to him to promote the liberty of the subject and the independence of Parliament. Hence, in the tangled politics of that age, when each party was often taking the side which, from its antecedents, might least be expected, he could never, apparently, be

<sup>s</sup> Ashley to Stringer, first published in the *General Dictionary*.

reckoned on to give a party vote. Of course, he incurred the displeasure and suffered from the disparagement of those whom he opposed. Toland, speaking of the "Apostate Whigs," who "could not endure him," says: "They gave out that he was splenetic and melancholy; whimsical and eaten up with vapours: whereas he was in reality just the reverse, naturally cheerful and pleasant, ever steady in his principles, and the farthest in the world from humoursome or fantastical." "They gave out that he was too bookish, because not given to play, nor assiduous at court; that he was no good companion, because not a rake nor a hard drinker, and that he was no man of the world, because not selfish nor open to bribes." According to the same authority, who is here supported by independent testimony, "the principal heads which offended him" in the action of many of his old friends, called by Toland "the Apostate Whigs," were "their opposing the Bill for Triennial Parliaments, that for regulating trials in cases of High Treason, that for ascertaining the Judges' Commissions and Salaries, that for qualifying Members of Parliament by estates in land and excluding them from offices and pensions, that for reducing the standing forces, and some other bills of the like nature, either explaining or restraining the Prerogative." At a time when the newly established order in Church and State was safe neither from foes without nor foes within, it is not so plain that those who were shy of restraining the Royal Prerogative, of increasing the independence of Parliament, and of multiplying the occasions for changing the public policy, were actuated solely by motives of sycophancy or corruption. There were many cross-currents in the politics of those years, and, perhaps, the pilot who seemed to pursue a vacillating course might not unreasonably claim the favourable judgment of his contemporaries. But that Lord Ashley, who was pro-

bably able to see great issues and to realise leading principles more readily than he was to enter into the ever-shifting complications of practical politics, acted in perfect good faith, and was inspired solely by an ardent desire for the public interests, there can be no doubt.<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately, his health was so treacherous that, on the Dissolution in July, 1698, he was obliged to retire from Parliamentary life. "The fatigues of attending regularly upon the service of the House (which in those active times generally sat long as well as upon Committees at night) in a few years so impaired my Father's health, who was not of a robust constitution, that he was obliged to decline coming again into Parliament on the Dissolution in 1698."<sup>1</sup> "He was in some little time," says Toland, "from one of the healthiest and most sprightly young noblemen in England, so violently seized with an asthma, that he could with great difficulty endure the fatigue of Parliamentary attendance; and at last could not bear with the smoke of London, which suffocated him to such a degree that he was forced to quit even the neighbourhood of it." Those who are acquainted with the events of Locke's life will recollect that he too, shortly after his return to England, had been obliged to retire from London, in consequence of the "pestilent smoke of this city," and that he too, like his pupil, suffered from asthma.<sup>2</sup> Many are the subsequent complaints

<sup>9</sup> In the rough draft, though not in the fair copy, of the *Life* by the Fourth Earl, occurs the following paragraph: "Several gentlemen in the House of Commons, who were of the same sentiments with my father, formed a little society by the name of the Independent Club, of which he was a member and had the chief hand in setting up, but this club was of no long duration."

<sup>1</sup> MS. *Life* by the Fourth Earl.

<sup>2</sup> See Locke's Letter to Limborch, March 12, 1689; my *Locke in English Men of Letters*, p. 56, or Mr. Fox-Bourne's *Life of Locke*, vol. ii. p. 150.

of Shaftesbury about the "town-smoke," and the east winds which carried it as far as his "little house" at Chelsea.<sup>3</sup> The smoke of London seems to have been more oppressive in those days than even in our own, or perhaps it is an affliction which we have learnt to bear more patiently than our ancestors.

Lord Ashley, however, was able for a time to escape both from the smoke of the city and from the troubled waters of English politics. "My Father being then released from the confinement of the House was at liberty to spend his time wherever it was most agreeable to him; he went directly into Holland, where he became acquainted with several learned and ingenious men who resided in that country, which induced him to continue there about a twelvemonth." Amongst the "learned and ingenious men" with whom he became acquainted, or whose acquaintance he renewed (for a letter written to Furlly, June 27, 1691,<sup>4</sup> commending to his care his brother Maurice, proves that he had himself passed through Holland on his travels as a youth), were Le Clerc (Joannes Clericus), the philosopher, theologian, and critic, who was now engaged in editing the *Bibliothèque Universelle*, one of the earliest literary and scientific reviews; Bayle, then a Professor at Rotterdam, subsequently the author of the celebrated dictionary which bears his name; Benjamin Furlly, the English quaker merchant, at whose house Locke had resided during his stay in Rotterdam, and who was always so ready to show kindness and hospitality to his countrymen sojourning in Holland; and probably Limborch and the rest of the literary circle of which Locke had been a cherished and honoured

<sup>3</sup> See, for instance, the letters to Molesworth.

<sup>4</sup> See *Original Letters*, 2nd ed., p. 51, but the letter is there wrongly dated. The original of this letter is amongst the Shaftesbury Papers in the Record Office (Bundle 20, No. 3).

member nine or ten years before. To Lord Ashley this society was probably far more congenial than the aristocratic and political surroundings which he had left behind him in England. Unrestrained conversation on the topics which most interested him—philosophy, politics, morals, religion—was at this time to be had in Holland with less danger and in greater abundance than in any other country in the world. It is to this period, in all probability, that we must refer a story told of him and Bayle.<sup>5</sup> Lord Ashley, as he would then be, if I am right in referring the story to this visit, had concealed his name and title, passing himself off as a student in Physic, in order that he might pursue his literary avocations with the greater freedom. Towards the end of his stay, however, he wished to be known to Bayle under his real name, and requested Furly, who was in the secret, to invite them both to dinner. Bayle received a formal invitation to meet Lord Ashley. On the morning of the day fixed for the party, he accidentally called upon his friend, the medical student, and was pressed to stay. It was impossible for him to do so, he said, “for I must be punctual to an engagement where I am to meet my Lord Ashley.” “The second interview,” proceeds the Fourth Earl, “caused some mirth, and their intimacy was rather increased than lessened after the discovery; for they

<sup>5</sup> The Fourth Lord tells this story in connexion with his father's visit to Holland in 1703-4, but, after the prolonged visit in 1698-9, Shaftesbury must have been too well known, at all events within his own circle, to have passed off, a second time, under an assumed name. Even had not his name and rank become known in 1699, they were almost certain to transpire within the three or four years which elapsed between the two visits. Moreover, in one of his letters to Furly (dated Jan. 30, 1701-2), contained amongst the Shaftesbury Papers, he says expressly: “I received lately a present from Mr. Bayle of his *Dictionary*; for which pray return him my humble thanks. I shall do it myself in a post or two.” In the *General Dictionary*, the story is assigned to the earlier visit.

never ceased a correspondence together after my Father's return to Monsieur Bayle's death."<sup>6</sup> To the period of this visit to Holland must also probably be referred the surreptitious impression or publication, during his absence, of an imperfect edition of the *Inquiry concerning Virtue*. "During my Father's stay in Holland" (though here again the Fourth Earl refers the event to the third visit), "an imperfect edition of his *Inquiry after Virtue* was printed' surreptitiously, taken from a rough draught, sketched when he was but twenty years of age. He was greatly chagrined at this, and immediately bought up the whole impression before many of the books were sold, and set about completing the treatise which he published himself not long after."<sup>8</sup> The person who treated him so unhandsomely he soon discovered to be Mr. Toland, who made this ungrateful return for the favours he had received from him. For my Father then allowed him (at his earnest importunity) an annual stipend, though he never had any great opinion of him. In this manner my Father frequently bestowed pensions on men of learning who

<sup>6</sup> Des Maiseaux, in his *Life of Bayle* prefixed to the *Dictionary*, represents Shaftesbury as intervening on Bayle's behalf, in 1706, with Lord Sunderland, who suspected him of maintaining communications with the French Government, and who seems to have been on the point of asking for his expulsion from Holland.

<sup>7</sup> In the rough draft of the *Life*, the word "published" is struck out, and the word "printed" inserted. In the *General Dictionary* (the account in which was seen and corrected by the Fourth Earl), the impression or publication of this imperfect edition is referred to Lord Ashley's absence from England in 1698-9. In the First Edition of the *Characteristics* (1711), the *Inquiry* is described as "printed first in 1699," and "formerly printed from an imperfect copy; now corrected and published intire." I have not been able to see any copy of Toland's edition, or to find any mention of it in a Catalogue.

<sup>8</sup> As the complete edition did not appear till 1711, this statement proceeds on what is probably the false impression of the Fourth Earl as to the date of Toland's edition.

stood in need of such assistance, and gave sums of money besides to those whom by experience he found deserving." Of Toland's character, and of Shaftesbury's generosity to struggling men of letters, I shall have other opportunities of speaking.

Lord Ashley returned to England after an absence of over a twelvemonth, and on Nov. 10, 1699, not long after his return, he succeeded to the title of Earl of Shaftesbury by the death of his father. For some time he was occupied with arranging his private and family affairs, to which he always appears to have devoted exemplary attention. He took his seat, however, in the House of Lords, Jan. 19, 1699-1700, and attended with tolerable regularity during the rest of the session.<sup>9</sup> Parliament was dissolved on the 19th of December, 1700, and the General Election, which ensued, was the occasion of a fierce contest between the Whigs and Tories. Shaftesbury, who, of course, exerted his influence on the Whig side, though he acknowledged that the Whigs had in recent years "been shameful in their over great condescensions to the Court," and by this conduct had "lost their interest much in the country,"<sup>1</sup> took a very active part in the elections of his own neighbourhood. "We are now in the midst of our elections," he writes to Furly, Jan. 11, 1700-1,<sup>2</sup> "of which the West of England having much the greatest share, and I being here placed with my fortune and all my interest, you may imagine I am not a little solicitous at this time of danger, having explained to you the extremity

<sup>9</sup> Journals of the House of Lords. The statements in the *General Dictionary* and in the *Life* by the Fourth Earl, that he did not attend the House during this session, are disproved by the Lords' Journals.

<sup>1</sup> *Original Letters*. Shaftesbury to Furly, Nov. 15, 1700. Shaftesbury Papers, Bundle 20, No. 15.

<sup>2</sup> *Original Letters*. Shaftesbury Papers, Bundle 20, No. 53.



of our affairs by these rash counsels for a dissolution at this conjuncture, which I am satisfied the King ere this is fully convinced was a wrong measure, enough to ruin us all." He hopes, however, that "the whole force of the new Tory Ministry will not be able to create a Tory Parliament;" "though," he adds, "it will come very near." Shaftesbury, as we have seen, had no scruple in asserting his independence on individual measures, by whichever side they might be introduced, but there can be no doubt as to his general loyalty to his party. "The only thing to be hoped and prayed for," he proceeds in the same letter, "is that the Tory party may not be superior: for, if but ever so little inferior, their numbers will be of service rather than of injury: for, as it is said of water or fire, so it may be said of them, that they are good servants, but ill masters; and, as by principles they are slaves, so they are only serviceable when they are kept so." "Let our friends in Holland know their friends here, and take notice that it is that party that hate the Dutch and love France, and the Whigs the only contrary party that can now save them and England."

Shaftesbury's hopes were disappointed, and the new House of Commons, which met on the 6th of February, 1700-1, contained a large majority of Tories. The Journals of the House of Lords show that Shaftesbury was peculiarly regular in his attendance throughout this session, and indeed there were personal as well as party reasons why he should be so. What is known as the Second Treaty of Partition, which had been concluded between England, Holland, and France in March 1700, had been divulged in the summer of this year, and the general discontent, which it excited not only amongst the Tories but also amongst several of the Whigs, had undoubtedly contributed to the Tory success in the general election. The new House of Commons attempted to gratify

its resentment by impeaching not only the Earl of Portland, who had taken an active part in negotiating the treaty, but also the late ministers, Admiral Russell, now Earl of Orford, Charles Montague, now Lord Halifax, and Lord Somers, whose share in the matter seems to have been limited to a reluctant acquiescence or to mere privity. And, not content with impeaching them, they presented an address to the King, asking him to remove them from his councils and presence for ever. The Lords presented a counter-address, praying that the King would be pleased to pass no censure or punishment upon the Lords impeached, during the dependence of the impeachment, Shaftesbury being placed on the Committee for drawing up the address. The business of the impeachments occupied a considerable time, but at last fell through altogether, in the month of June, from the failure of the Commons to appear in support of their charges. Shaftesbury was, no doubt, loyal to his friends and his party throughout these proceedings. The result of the impeachments must have been a great triumph to the Whigs, and it contributed, together with the growing jealousy of France, to which the existing ministry was supposed to be partial, to discredit the Tory majority in the lower house. Foreign affairs had taken a curious turn since the conclusion of the Second Partition Treaty. Charles the Second, King of Spain, the succession to whose dominions had been so unceremoniously parcelled out by the three powers, died on the 1st of November, 1700. Philip Duke of Anjou, second son of the Dauphin, was named in his will as heir to the undivided Spanish Monarchy, and, failing him, Charles Archduke of Austria. The temptation was too strong for Louis the Fourteenth, and, notwithstanding the recent treaty, he accepted the throne for his grandson. Of course, the Balance of Power was now completely changed. Not long after the meeting of the English Parliament in

February 1700-1, a message was conveyed to the House of Lords that the States General had felt themselves obliged to acknowledge the title of the Duke of Anjou, without any conditions. This necessity was laid upon them by the fact that Louis had adroitly turned out the Dutch garrisons which manned the border fortresses of the Spanish Netherlands, and had replaced them by French troops. William made overtures to France for an accommodation, but in vain. The result was the conclusion of a new alliance at the Hague, on the 7th of September, between England, Holland, and the Emperor. This is known in history as the Grand Alliance. Only nine days afterwards (Sept. 16, 1701), James the Second died at St. Germain, and Louis, in spite of the treaty of Ryswick, acknowledged his son as James the Third, King of England. The King of France had thus offered an affront which neither William nor the English nation could tolerate, and a war had now become inevitable. But the prospect of a war with France and the possibility of a Jacobite invasion soon turned the tide against the Tories and in favour of the Whigs. Both the king and the nation were weary of the Tory ministry, and, on November 11, Parliament was dissolved, in the hopes that a Whig majority, zealous for a French War and the Protestant Succession, would be returned. Nor were these hopes disappointed. The City of London set the example, and the nation at large responded by returning a working majority, ready to support a Whig policy. To this result, and all that he conceived must follow from it, Shaftesbury had for some months been looking forward with eager expectation. Writing to Furlly on the 4th of the previous March, he says : " No French King of Spain is a plain course, as plain as No King James, no owning a Prince of Wales, no Popery nor Slavery." " The People of England will (if the Court will let them) engage in a war, and never yield nor

hear of yielding whilst France is to have anything to do with Spain." On the 1st of April, he says: "I, who am naturally so inactive, am working day and night for the common interest of Holland and this country." On the 15th,<sup>3</sup> he hopes that "this session will be the last of this Parliament," and "doubts not but the Tories will so work that the King will be glad to be rid of them, and will be so, soon after the Parliament rises; for England cannot have justice till this Parliament be dissolved." The distrust of the King, expressed at the end of this letter, is remarkable: "He might do everything, had he resolution. The spirit of the people is greater and greater. They do not betray the common cause nor themselves, but, if he betray himself, what can we say or do?" Just before Parliament rose, he writes (June 20): "The House of Commons will be no sooner up, but I believe all England will be ready to petition the King to dissolve them." Subsequently, he began to complain of the King's delay, and even despaired of the Dissolution taking place. He foresees (Sept. 15) "inevitable ruin, if the King resolves again to meet this unhappy Parliament." When, at last, the much wished-for Dissolution came, Shaftesbury exerted himself to the utmost, and with the most marked success. Writing to Furly, Dec. 29, just after the elections were over, he says: "I had the strongest obligation on earth upon me to act with vigour, as I have done, since the opportunity the King has most happily given us. And it has pleased Providence to bless me with great success. For, having my province (and that a very hard one) in two counties long in the hands of the most inveterate of the adverse party, I notwithstanding carried all that I attempted in both. In one of them (viz. Wilts), which my brother "

<sup>3</sup> This letter (No. 22 in Bundle 20 of Shaftesbury Papers) is wrongly dated in *Original Letters*.

[Maurice Ashley] "and his friend represent instead of two inveterate Tories, we have there mended the elections by 8, which is a difference of 16 in Parliament; and in Dorsetshire (my own county) we have gained also considerably." His friend Sir John Cropley was brought in for Shaftesbury, "which was ever entirely in their hands since my Grandfather's death, but which I have now entirely recovered and made zealous." He adds: "as a token that the King himself is right as we would wish, he yesterday gave me most hearty thanks for my zeal and good services on this occasion, and this before much company." The Fourth Earl informs us that "the King told" his Father "that he had turned the scale, and my Father after this was so well approved of by the King that he had the offer of being Secretary of State, which his declining constitution would not allow him to accept;<sup>4</sup> but, although he was disabled from engaging in such a course of business, he was not from giving the King his advice, who frequently consulted him on matters of the highest importance." On Dec. 30 the houses met, and on Dec. 31 the King made the famous speech, which sent a thrill of enthusiasm throughout the nation, and which was afterwards printed in French, Dutch, and English, framed, and hung up in the houses of sound patriots and good Protestants throughout England and Holland. In this speech he told his Parliament, if they were not wanting to themselves, but

<sup>4</sup> In a memorandum dated July 9, 1703, preserved among the Shaftesbury Papers (Bundle 20, No. 73), Shaftesbury himself writes: "My zeal for the Revolution and the late King's cause made me active for the support of that Government and for the establishment of the Protestant Succession; and it was my good fortune to have my services well thought of by the King and acknowledged by him with great favour. I had the honour of many offers from him; but, thinking I could best serve him and my country in a disinterested station, I resolved absolutely against taking any employment at Court."

would exert the ancient vigour of the English nation, they had yet the opportunity of securing to themselves and their posterity the quiet enjoyment of their religion and liberties ; he conjured them to disappoint the only hopes of their enemies by their unanimity ; he declared how desirous he was of showing himself the common father of all his people, and he entreated them, in their turn, to lay aside all parties and divisions. "Let there be no other distinction heard of among us, for the future, but of those who are for the Protestant Religion and the present Establishment; and of those who mean a Popish Prince and a French Government." The Fourth Earl says, "it was pretty well known" that his father had the greatest share in composing this speech, and Dr. Birch repeats the statement in the *General Dictionary*. Lord Stanhope, however, and Lord Campbell ascribe its composition to Somers, and Lord Hardwicke states that he recollects seeing a draft of the speech among Somers' papers in his own handwriting.<sup>5</sup> Shaftesbury and Somers seem always to have been intimate friends, and, as the speech undoubtedly expresses the sentiments of them both, they may both have had a hand in composing it. On the 2nd of January, 1701-2, Shaftesbury was one of the Committee appointed to draw up an address "to assure His Majesty, that this House will stand by and assist him, in reducing the exorbitant power of France and settling the balance of Europe."

With the connivance of some of the Whigs, Harley had been elected Speaker of the new House of Commons. In a letter to Furlly, dated Jan. 30, 1701-2,<sup>6</sup> Shaftesbury says of

<sup>5</sup> See *Miscellaneous State Papers*, edited by Lord Hardwicke, London, 1778. The greater part of Somers' Manuscripts was destroyed by a fire which broke out at Lincoln's Inn in 1752.

<sup>6</sup> This letter, from which I have already quoted, is wrongly dated, as 1702-3, in *Original Letters*.

him: "R. Harley is ours at the bottom. I cannot call him truly a Man of Virtue; for then he had not been lost to us by any disobligation or ill-usage, which he has had sufficient. He is truly what is called in the world a Great Man, and it is by him alone that Party has raised itself to such a greatness as almost to destroy us. . . . But I believe there is hopes of gaining him. If *He*" [meaning the King], "who has done so much to divide and break and ruin his own party and friends, will but do half so much to piece 'em up and unite 'em, the thing will be easy, and the cause our own. This Gentleman and others will then soon come over." In a subsequent letter (Feb. 27), however, he regards Harley as "desperately engaged" to the other party.

Had the King's life continued, Shaftesbury's influence at Court would probably have been considerable, but, unfortunately for the prospects of the Whigs, William died on the 8th of March, 1701-2. Though no change was made in the foreign relations of the kingdom, Anne, who had been taught to regard the Whig party with abhorrence, studiously excluded its leading representatives from office and from court. Somers was not only not sworn of the new Privy Council, but his name was even struck off the Commission of the Peace. Shaftesbury was deprived of the Vice-Admiralty of Dorset, which had been in the family for three successive generations. "This slight," says his son, "though it was a matter of no sort of consequence to my Father, was the only one that could be shown him, as it was the single thing he held under the Crown." After the first few weeks of the new reign, Shaftesbury returned to his retired mode of life, but his letters to Furlly show that he still retained a keen interest in politics. Though he calculates that the Tory party is as two to one in the House of Commons which was elected in the summer of 1702, he declares himself not dis-

heartened, but rejoices to hear so well of the cause of liberty in Holland. He must be cautious, however, in what he says (and the necessity, or supposed necessity, for caution may account for his letters to Furly now becoming less frequent), "for, as times are now turning with us, we must take more care of our expressions than we were used." In November of this year, he speaks of the necessity of withdrawing from public affairs, both for his mind's sake and his health's sake, "because my efforts in time of extremity, for this last year or two, have been so much beyond my strength in every respect." The house at St. Giles' seems to have been broken up in December, 1702, and Shaftesbury now determined on paying a prolonged visit to Holland, living meanwhile at his house in Chelsea. He was detained in England for some time by the arrangements connected with the approaching marriage of one of his sisters, "our law-affairs being most dilatory." But in August he was at length ready to start. His health was now "mightily impaired by fatigues in the public affairs," and he was very anxious to lead a quiet and retired life. Like Locke, he appears to have had great faith in the air of Holland, and specially of Rotterdam, which is "happily as good or better than any." He was not disinclined to meet a friend occasionally at Furly's house, but, excepting Furly and his family, he did not wish to have any callers at his lodgings, "by which rule I kept myself so easy and private the last time." There was a difficulty, however, about the passage; for he feared "nothing so much as falling alive into French hands," and "our Admiralty affairs grow every day so much worse as yours I hope grow better."<sup>7</sup> At Rotterdam he lived, he says in a letter to his steward

<sup>7</sup> Shaftesbury to Furly, June 25, 1703.



Wheelock,<sup>8</sup> at the rate of less than 200*l.* a year, and yet had much "to dispose of and spend beyond convenient living." The contrast between his expenses in Holland and at St. Giles' seems to have struck him forcibly. Unless the "mass of gardens and housing can be brought into a cheaper way of maintenance," he will neither live at St. Giles', nor "keep in repair a place that eats up the estate belonging to it and makes its master a beggar." It appears that Shaftesbury returned to England, much improved in health, in August, 1704. During his absence from the House of Lords, his proxy was held, at least for a time, by Lord Somers.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, after his return from Holland, he seems to have attended Parliament only on very rare occasions. Though he had received immediate benefit from his stay abroad, symptoms of consumption were constantly alarming him, his eyes were very troublesome, and he gradually became a confirmed invalid. His occupations were now almost exclusively literary, and, from this time forwards, he was probably engaged in writing, completing, or revising the Treatises which were afterwards included in the *Characteristics*.<sup>1</sup> He still continued, however, to take a warm interest in politics, both home and foreign, and especially in the war against France. That he shared to the full in the national prejudices against the French is curiously shown in a letter to Arent Furly, a son of Mr. Furly and a great favourite of Locke, written Feb. 18, 1704-5: "Whatever flashes may now and then appear, I never knew one single Frenchman a free man. Nor do

<sup>8</sup> Shaftesbury to Wheelock, Dec. 18, 1703.

<sup>9</sup> Somers to Shaftesbury. Shaftesbury Papers, Bundle 20, No 87.

<sup>1</sup> Speaking of a somewhat later period, his son says: "The last five years of my father's life he employed himself altogether in writing, which was his principal amusement." Rough Draft of *Life*.

I think it in nature possible, if they have early sucked that air, or been bred, though in foreign nations, amongst people and books of their own kind." Writing to the same correspondent on Dec. 5, 1705, he says: "Your former and latter advices, first of the successful attack, and next of the surrender of Barcelona" [due to the enterprise of the Earl of Peterborough and Sir Cloudesley Shovel], "with the whole progress of your councils, were of all news I ever received the most welcome." In a letter to Furly, the father, written on the 11th of October, 1706, from Hampstead, whither he had retired on account of the smoke of Chelsea, he doubts "whether the Whigs and Court, joining together, have interest enough to carry their main point in Parliament, namely, the Union with Scotland, without which we shall be in great confusion because of the Succession." The Government and the Court, he acknowledges in this letter, are every day growing better. In another letter to Furly, dated St. Giles', Dec. 2, 1706, he speaks of the "sad prospect" it is "for either nation," England and Holland, "to think of the fair prospect France has of getting such a part of Britain under the title of a new king, which, if the Queen's death at this instant should fatally happen, I scarce see how it would be prevented. . . . . Nothing in truth but this happy alliance and the strong friendship between us and the Dutch can save this blow." Happily, on the 6th of March following (1706-7), the Bill for uniting the two kingdoms received the Royal Assent, and thus became law.

Writing to Furly on March 26, 1708, Shaftesbury says that, though he is sure he has no partiality "for those who are called our ministry," yet he must do them justice, and he thinks that "they deserve far better of their country and Holland, and particularly of their sovereign, than as they are at present rated by some, both here in England and with

you." At this time there was a *rapprochement* between Shaftesbury and Godolphin, which forms one of the principal topics in the letters written to Robert (subsequently Viscount) Molesworth between September, 1708, and November, 1709, the collection prematurely published by Toland. The vigorous prosecution of the war against the French, and a loyal and hearty co-operation with Holland, were amongst the most cherished articles of Shaftesbury's political creed, and to these he regarded Godolphin, notwithstanding his Tory connexions and antecedents, a faithful adherent. In fact, in the course of these last few years, Marlborough and Godolphin, the General and the Treasurer, as they were called, had become such moderate Tories that they might almost be counted as Whigs. Moreover, the young Earl of Sunderland and Lord Cowper had now for some time been respectively Secretary of State and Lord Chancellor, and, in November, 1708, even Somers was restored to office as Lord President of the Council. Thus, the favourable expressions with which Shaftesbury had come to speak of the ministry and the prevailing policy by no means marked an act of tergiversation on his part, but rather a cheerful recognition of the turn which affairs had taken since the beginning of the Queen's reign. That he was no trimmer, or timidly inclined to conciliate the party in office, is clear from the manly letter which he wrote, in 1711, to Harley, recently created Earl of Oxford, when thanking him for facilitating his arrangements for travelling abroad:<sup>2</sup> "Your conduct of the public will be the just earnest and insurance of your greatness and power; and I shall then chiefly congratulate with your lordship on

<sup>2</sup> This letter is printed in the *General Dictionary*. The date March 29, there given, is an error for May 29. Harley was not created Earl of Oxford and Mortimer till May 24. In Shaftesbury's Entry Book of Letters, the date is correctly copied.

your merited honours and advancement, when by the happy effects it appears evidently in the service of what cause, and for the advantage of what interest, they were acquired and employed."

Another topic prominent in the letters of Shaftesbury to Molesworth (who seems to have been specially selected as his confidant in this matter) is the love affair which occupied his mind in 1708 and the early part of 1709. He was now nearly forty years of age, but does not appear hitherto to have thought of marrying. His friends, however, and Molesworth among them, seem to have been urgent upon him to provide a successor to the title, as his brother Maurice did not appear any more inclined to marry than himself. The young lady whom Shaftesbury selected, and for whom he seems to have contracted a real affection, was the daughter of an "old lord," a person of great wealth and high position. It was apparently a case of love at first sight. "There is a lady, whom chance has thrown into my neighbourhood, and whom I never saw till the Sunday before last, who is in every respect that very person I had ever framed a picture of from my imagination, when I wished the best for my own happiness in such a circumstance." "Every circumstance suited exactly, all but her fortune."<sup>3</sup> This was not too small, but too large, and Shaftesbury was afraid of being thought a fortune-hunter. He was ready to take her without any dowry at all, but the "old lord" seems to have been afraid of engaging his daughter to a person in Shaftesbury's precarious state of health, and the affair came to nothing. It is curious that Shaftesbury found, or imagined that he found, a rival in Charles Montague, Lord Halifax. Halifax, however, did not marry a lord's daughter, and we have now no clue to the young lady's name. Shortly after this

<sup>3</sup> *Letters to Molesworth.* Letter I.

match dropped through, Shaftesbury sought and obtained the hand of Miss Jane Ewer, a distant relative, the daughter of a gentleman in Hertfordshire, "with little or no fortune, and not in the highest degree of quality neither," but possessing the more important recommendations of "a right education," and of "simple innocence, modesty, and the plain qualities of a good mother and a good nurse."<sup>4</sup> The marriage took place in the autumn of 1709, and on Feb. 9, 1710-11, was born, at his house at Reigate in Surrey, his only child and heir, the fourth Earl, to whose account of his father I have so often referred. This match was in every respect a happy one, and the Countess appears to have tended her husband with the most affectionate solicitude. He, however, neither had, nor affected to have, much sentiment, though he had doubtless much regard and respect, for this lady of his second choice. "Were I to talk of marriage, and forced to speak my mind plainly, and without the help of humour and raillery, I should doubtless offend the most part of sober married people, and the ladies chiefly: for I should in reality think I did wonders, in extolling the happiness of my new state, and the merit of my wife in particular, by saying that I verily thought myself as happy a man now as ever."<sup>5</sup> It was well that it was even so; for, if we may trust Shaftesbury's account of the education of young girls at that time,<sup>6</sup> there must have been few, in the upper ranks of society, who were not calculated to make his home less happy than it was before.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> *Letters to Molesworth.* Letter XIII.

<sup>5</sup> *Letters to Molesworth.* Letter XIV.

<sup>6</sup> See *Original Letters*, Shaftesbury to Furlly, Nov. 3, 1708.

<sup>7</sup> Mr. Garnett of the British Museum has kindly called my attention to two letters, written by Locke to Shaftesbury (then Lord Ashley), contained in the Forster Collection in the South Kensington Museum, dated respectively 5 Aug. and 15 Aug. 1699. In the former of these, Locke recommends to his former pupil, as a suitable wife, a "young lady, hand-

With the exception of a Preface to the *Sermons* of Dr. Whichcote, one of the Cambridge Platonists or Latitudinarians, published in 1698,<sup>8</sup> Shaftesbury appears to have printed nothing himself till the year 1708. About this time, the French Prophets, as they were called, that is, the poor Cevenol Protestants, who had been hunted out of their native mountains and valleys by the troops of Louis XIV., and some of whom had taken refuge in England, attracted much attention by the extravagancies and follies of which they were guilty. Various remedies of the repressive and persecuting kind were proposed, but Shaftesbury maintained that fanaticism was best encountered by "raillery" and "good humour." In support of this view he wrote a letter to Lord Somers, dated September, 1707. But the letter was not printed till the following year, and then without the name of either the author or the person to whom it was addressed. It was answered in the course of that and the next year by no less than three pamphlets. In May, 1709, Shaftesbury returned to the subject, and printed another Letter, entitled *Sensus Communis: An Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour*. In the same year, he also published *The Moralists, a Philosophical Rhapsody*; and, in the following year, *Soliloquy or Advice to an Author*. None of these pieces, I believe, were printed either with his name or his initials. In 1711, appeared the *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, in Three Volumes, also without any name or initials on the title-page, and without even the name of a

some, well-natured, well-bred, discreet, with a great many other good qualities," and a fortune of twenty thousand pounds to boot, besides expectancies. In the latter, he makes the sensible remark that "how much soever the world wonders that you do not marry, it is certain that you are the best judge when that ought to be."

<sup>8</sup> These *Sermons*, which had become very rare, were republished at Edinburgh, with an introduction by Dr. W. Wishart, in 1742.

printer. There are, however, several capital letters at the end of the Preface, of which the first three, A. A. C., were intended to designate the name of the author. These three handsome volumes contain, in addition to the four treatises already mentioned, *Miscellaneous Reflections*, now first printed, and the *Inquiry concerning Virtue or Merit*, described as "formerly printed from an imperfect copy, now corrected and published intire," and as "printed first in the year 1699."<sup>9</sup>

The declining state of Shaftesbury's health rendered it necessary for him to seek a warmer climate, and in July, 1711, he set out for Italy. The Duke of Berwick, natural son of James the Second, and now a Marshal of France, was in command of the French troops which lay encamped on the borders of Piedmont. It was necessary for Shaftesbury, in order to enter Italy, to pass through his army, but the Duke, we are informed, entertained him in the most friendly and polite manner, and conducted him safely to the dominions of the Duke of Savoy, one of our allies. He settled at Naples in November, and lived there considerably over a year. His health had now become so precarious that his son considers this a long time, and can only account for the prolongation of his life by referring it to "the excellence of the air of Italy and the uncommon care of my mother in attending him." His principal occupation at this time must have consisted in preparing for the press a second edition of the *Characteristics*, which appeared in 1713, soon after his death. The copy, most carefully corrected in his own handwriting, is still preserved in the British Museum. The prints in this

<sup>9</sup> Lowndes speaks of an edition printed in 1709, but I can find no trace of such a book, and the description of the Treatise quoted in the text seems inconsistent with the existence of an intermediate edition.

edition, as well probably as those which had appeared in the former edition, were all invented by himself, and designed under his immediate inspection. He was also engaged, during his stay at Naples, in writing the little treatise (afterwards included in the *Characteristics*) entitled, *A Notion of the Historical Draught or Tablature of the Judgment of Hercules*, and the Letter concerning *Design*. The former was published in 1713; the latter, though it occurs in a large paper copy of the second edition, preserved in the British Museum, does not seem to have been generally included in the editions of the *Characteristics* till 1732. A little before his death, he had also formed a scheme of writing a Discourse on the Arts of Painting, Sculpture, Etching, &c., but, when he died, he had made but little progress with it.<sup>1</sup> "Medals, and pictures, and antiquities," he writes to Furly, "are our chief entertainments here." His conversation was with men of art and science, "the virtuosi of this place."

It is sad to find, in Shaftesbury's last letter to Furly, dated Naples, 19 July, 1712, that his view of the political condition of his own country and of the future of Europe had become so gloomy. "You have known my heart many years, and that hitherto on all occasions I gave comfort, and was ever on the promising side; till the fatal villainy of the seditious priest Sacheveril, and the fall of the old Ministry and Whigs, never was I dejected till this turn." Not only had Godolphin, and the leading Whigs, Somers, Halifax, Sunderland, Cowper, and Orford, ceased to take part in the royal counsels in or before the autumn of 1710, but, on the 31st of December, 1711, the great Duke of Marlborough himself had been dismissed from all his employ-

<sup>1</sup> Amongst the Shaftesbury Papers, there is a common-place book (Bundle 27, No. 15) which seems to contain heads and notes for this work.



ments. The Duke of Ormond succeeded Marlborough as Commander of the forces in Flanders, and at home Harley and St. John, the latter of whom had been created Viscount Bolingbroke a few days before Shaftesbury's letter to Furly was written, were now at the height of their power. But it was not so much the displacement of one party by another that troubled Shaftesbury, as the change in English foreign policy which accompanied it. The Whigs, as well as Marlborough and Godolphin, had been eager supporters of the war and of the Grand Alliance. The Tories, in these matters, were suspected of being at least lukewarm, if not of rendering themselves subservient to the interests of France. In the negotiations which preceded the Treaty of Utrecht, it was plain that the English ministers were endeavouring to make separate terms, and were basely deserting the interests of the allies. Marlborough, in his speech on the address in the House of Lords, at the beginning of June, had said: "The measures pursued in England for a year past are directly contrary to her Majesty's engagements with the Allies, have sullied the triumphs and glories of her reign, and will render the English name odious to all other nations."<sup>2</sup> It was not merely, therefore, the petulance or despondency of an invalid, when Shaftesbury, in the letter quoted above, wrote to Furly, "to condole on the most sad shame and reproach of our nation, which I never thought to have lived to see, and which makes my sad health and little prospect of recovery the less grievous to me, as a means to end that sense of shame which I shall ever retain for my country, even though it should recover itself from these calamities such as it is like to bring on the rest of the world as well as on itself." As if conscious that he is writing his last letter to

<sup>2</sup> Lord Stanhope's *Reign of Queen Anne*, p. 528.

this constant and trusted correspondent, he adds, towards the conclusion : "But Providence is in all ; and every honest man carries his reward within his breast. I have mine (I bless God) in a good conscience of having done my best, and even brought myself to this weak state of health by my cares and labours for the good interest and cause of liberty and mankind."

Shaftesbury did not live to see the actual conclusion of the peace of Utrecht, which was signed on March 31, 1713. He died the month before, Feb. 4, O.S., when he had not yet completed his forty-second year. Writing to Wheelock on the 10th of January, and taking a tender farewell of him and his household, he speaks of his state as desperate, and his pains inexpressible. Crell, a young Pole, who was one of his protégés and had become his Secretary, wrote to Furly a few days after his master's<sup>3</sup> death : "His Lordship was in a perfect resignation to the will of God, that he did not only bear his pains and agonies with patience, but also with perfect cheerfulness and the same sweetness of temper he always enjoyed in the most perfect health."

Shaftesbury's amiability of character seems to have been one of his principal characteristics. All accounts concur in representing him as full of sweetness and kindness towards others, though he may sometimes himself have been the victim of melancholy and despondency. Nor was his benevolence confined to manner, expression, and words. His purse seems always to have been open, not only to the necessitous poor, but to persons in a higher station in whom he

<sup>3</sup> The use of the word servant at this time is curiously illustrated in Shaftesbury's last letter to Furly. Though he had sent Crell to Leyden and Cambridge, and was now employing him in the capacity of secretary, he speaks of him as one of his head-servants. Similarly, Crell speaks of Shaftesbury as his master.

discovered signs of promise or merit. Like Locke, he had a peculiar pleasure in bringing forward young men. Not only did he help them with money, but he was always ready to give them his advice and even his instruction. Michael Ainsworth, a native of St. Giles', the young man who was the recipient of the *Letters* addressed to a Student at the University, was maintained by him at University College, Oxford. The keen interest which Shaftesbury took in his studies, and the desire that he should be specially fitted for the profession which he had selected, that of a Clergyman of the Church of England, are marked features of the letters. Crell, the young Pole mentioned above, whom he maintained at Leyden and Cambridge, and Harry Wilkinson, a boy who was sent into Furly's office at Rotterdam, and to whom several of the extant letters are addressed, afford other instances of Shaftesbury's beneficence. The two young Furlys, though they were in no need of pecuniary assistance, were always objects of interest to him, and Arent, with whom he had read some of the classical authors,<sup>4</sup> seems to have been an especial favourite with him, as he was also with Locke. His kindness to literary men has already been noticed, in speaking of Toland. Le Clerc received 200*l.* from him for his dedication of *Menander*.<sup>5</sup> When Des Maiseaux arrived in London, Shaftesbury pressed his services upon him. "If there be any service that I can do you, or that your circumstances need my assistance, I beg you would be free with me as with a friend. For I intend you shall use me so."<sup>6</sup> His careful solicitude for the welfare of the poor in his own neighbourhood, for the good order of his household, and for the exercise of due hospitality, not only to his tenants and neighbours, but also

<sup>4</sup> *Original Letters*. Shaftesbury to A. Furly, Dec. 5, 1705.

<sup>5</sup> Rough draft of *Life* by the Fourth Earl.

<sup>6</sup> Birch MSS. in British Museum, No. 4288.

to strangers and foreigners, are still attested in the directions given to his housekeeper.<sup>7</sup> She is to learn the character of the servants, whether men or women, and "to inform my Lord, that no ill customs be concealed, or anything of ill example carried on, to the prejudice of the family or contrary to Religion or good manners." She is earnestly recommended to show hospitality to strangers, "so much the more as they are the more strangers and from distant parts, but especially foreigners, if any pass this way in my Lord's absence." She is to "esteem it as a chief concern in charge with her to know the characters and condition of the neighbouring poor; that so my Lord may know by her what families deserve encouragement and reward, that charity may be rightly placed, and that what meat is distributed out of the house may be sent to honest families in distress, each in their turn." The pernicious practice of distributing meat at the gate was specially forbidden, it being "to the great injury of the modest poor, and to the encouragement of vagabonds and others in this shameless and dissolute life." She is to enquire particularly of the children on the estate, "and of their schooling (which my Lord allows them), to make her remarks on the hopeful and sober children growing up, whom my Lord may be further kind to, or take afterwards into his service within doors or without." Lastly, all occurrences in the family are to be communicated to my Lord by letter, in his absence, every Saturday night. These details are worthy of attention, because they show that Shaftesbury's benevolence was not confined to his ethical theories, but that it governed and pervaded his acts. No philosopher probably,

<sup>7</sup> Shaftesbury Papers, Bundle 22, No. 3. These papers contain a set of elaborate directions to the principal servants on his estate and in his household. The instructions for "Mrs. Cooper" are dated May 24, 1707.

at least in modern times, ever attempted to show forth his philosophy in his life more completely than Shaftesbury. It has been said of Spinoza that he was intoxicated with the idea of God. It might be said with equal truth of Shaftesbury that he was intoxicated with the idea of Virtue, and Virtue with him meant, above all things, benevolence and care for others.

Nor was Shaftesbury's benevolence simply of a private character. Though the asthma from which he suffered prevented him from appearing much in Parliament, he was always intensely interested in public affairs, and ready to sacrifice to what he deemed the public interest his time, his money, and even his health. To the intensity of his political interests and the severity of his studies combined, his son ascribes the shortness of his life. "His life would probably have been much longer, if he had not worn it out by great fatigues of body and mind, which was owing to his eager desire after knowledge as well as to his zeal to serve his country; for he was so intent on pursuing his studies that he frequently spent not only the whole day but great part of the night besides in severe application, which confirmed the truth of Mr. Locke's observation on him that the sword was too sharp for the scabbard."<sup>8</sup>

In the popular mind, Shaftesbury is generally regarded as a writer hostile to religion. But, however short his orthodoxy might fall if tried by the standards of any particular church, and however mistaken might be the conception which he had formed for himself of the effects of the Christian teaching prevalent in his day, his temperament was pre-eminently a religious one. This fact is shown conspicuously in his letters, where he had no reason for making any secret of his opinions. The belief in a God, all wise, all just, and all merciful, governing the

<sup>8</sup> Rough Draft of Life by the Fourth Earl.

world providentially for the best, pervades all his works, his correspondence, and his life. Nor had he any wish to undermine established beliefs, except where he conceived that they conflicted with a truer religion and a purer morality. We have seen that he charged himself with the education of at least one young man for the purpose of enabling him to enter Holy Orders in the Church of England. He expresses the most genuine admiration for the character of the Bishop of his own diocese, Bishop Burnet.<sup>9</sup> To Dr. Whichcote's Sermons, he wrote a most appreciative Preface, hoping that "if they who are set against Christianity cannot be won over by anything that they may find here," yet that "the excellent spirit which is shown here will make such as are already Christians to prize and value Christianity the more." According to his son,<sup>1</sup> "whenever his health permitted, he was constant in attending the services of the Church of England, and received the Holy Communion regularly three or four times a year. He had read the Scriptures so diligently that, to assist his memory, he made short observations in the margin of almost every chapter throughout the Old and New Testament." In a letter to his brother Maurice, quoted both by the Fourth Earl and in the *General Dictionary*, he speaks with great satisfaction of their having received the Communion together, and of their joining "in blessing that good Providence . . . . which had given us such established rites of worship as were so decent, chaste, innocent, pure, and had placed us in a church . . . . where zeal was not frenzy and enthusiasm; prayer and devotion not rage and fits of loose extravagance; religious discoveries not cant and unintelligible nonsense; but where a good and virtuous life, with a hearty endeavour of service to one's

<sup>9</sup> *Letters to a Young Man at the University.* Letter X.

<sup>1</sup> Rough Draft of Life.

country and to mankind, joined with a religious performance of all sacred duties and a conformity with the established rites, was enough to answer the highest character of Religion." This language is not very fervid, but it is as remote as possible from that of a scoffer. As his son very truly says, it was not Religion that he derided, but the appearance of it. The light air, approaching often to banter, with which at times he unfortunately discussed sacred topics, is no proof that he did not recognize their sacredness. "He was naturally of a cheerful temper, which he carried with him in all parts of life, and with this turn of mind he looked upon Religion as well as Philosophy, and thought good humour very consistent with the most pleasing subject in the world."<sup>2</sup>

As regards personal habits, Shaftesbury is reported to have been remarkably abstemious at a time when riotous living was the rule amongst the upper classes of society, and not the exception. "He never impaired his health by intemperance, for he was sober in every respect, to such a degree as might be called properly enough even abstinence."<sup>3</sup>

His friends he attached warmly to him, and he seems to have won the sincere admiration of many of the most eminent among his contemporaries. Sir John Cropley (whose house at Betchworth was frequently his home) was his fast friend throughout life. With Furlly he kept up a long and intimate correspondence, and his Dutch friends generally seem to have been faithful to him, and he to them. The personal relations between him and Locke, notwithstanding the wide divergence of their philosophical views, appear never to have cooled. With Robert (afterwards Lord) Molesworth and Lord Somers he was always on terms of the

<sup>2</sup> Rough Draft of Life.

<sup>3</sup> Rough Draft of Life.

strictest confidence. Somers writes to him not merely as a political ally, but as a friend and as one for whom he has a real regard. Molesworth, who had no special reason for flattering him, speaks of him as "possessing right reason in a more eminent degree than the rest of mankind," and of his character as "the highest that the perfection of human nature is capable of."<sup>4</sup> Even Warburton, in his *Dedication of the Divine Legation* to the Free-Thinkers, is compelled to "own that this Lord had many excellent qualities, both as a man and a writer. He was temperate, chaste, honest, and a lover of his country."

As an earnest student, an ardent lover of liberty, an enthusiast in the cause of virtue, and a man of unblemished life and untiring beneficence, Shaftesbury probably had no superior in his generation. His character and pursuits are the more remarkable, considering the rank of life in which he was born and the circumstances under which he was brought up. In many respects, he reminds us of the imperial philosopher, Marcus Aurelius, whose works we know him to have studied with avidity,<sup>5</sup> and whose influence is unmistakably stamped upon his own productions.

<sup>4</sup> R. Molesworth to Shaftesbury, Nov. 12, 1709. Shaftesbury Papers, Bundle 21, No. 180.

<sup>5</sup> "Among the writings which he most admired, and carried always with him, were the moral works of Xenophon, Horace, the *Commentaries* and *Enchiridion* of Epictetus as published by Arrian, and Marcus Antoninus. These authors are now extant in his library, filled throughout with marginal notes, references, and explanations, all written with his own hand." Life in the *General Dictionary*. As Dr. Kippis says, in the Life in the *Biographia Britannica*, Plato ought undoubtedly to have been added to this list. Amongst the Shaftesbury Papers (Bundle 27) there are included neat transcripts of translations of the *Enchiridion* and of Bk. 1, chs. 1—28, of the *Commentaries* of Epictetus, but whether these are copies of translations made by Shaftesbury himself I cannot say.

It may here be mentioned that in the same bundle there is a "Design



Lord Shaftesbury's body was brought back to England by sea and buried at St. Giles'. His wife long survived him. His son lived to be an estimable nobleman, and evidently looked back with pride and reverence on his father's memory. His brother Maurice, notwithstanding his miserable failure to acquire any knowledge of Latin and Greek at Winchester, published a translation of Xenophon's *Cyropædia*, with an Introduction to his sister, which passed through some editions. This sister, Elizabeth, married a Mr. Harris, ancestor of the present Earl of Malmesbury, by whom she had a son, James Harris, author of several semi-philosophical works, such as *Hermes*, *Philological Enquiries*, &c., which at one time had a wide circulation. Though Shaftesbury was one of the earliest of English moralists, and died so long ago as 1712-13, the present Earl is only his great-grandson.

for a Socratic History," to be gathered from the original sources, in Shaftesbury's own handwriting. Several notes and memoranda had already been collected. Also, in the second edition of the *Biographia Britannica*, are printed numerous Latin notes on the *Satires* and *Epistles* of Horace, written in the margin of his copy of that author.

## CHAPTER II.

## WORKS AND STYLE.

ALL the works which Shaftesbury designed to be printed, with the exception of the Preface to Dr. Whichcote's *Sermons*, are contained in the editions of the *Characteristics* dating from 1732 onwards. Of the style and contents of the several treatises comprised in this collection, I shall have occasion to speak presently. It is sufficient to state here that the *Characteristics* have passed through several editions, most of which are distinguished for the elegance of their execution and the excellence of their typography. The most sumptuous of these is the celebrated Baskerville Edition, printed at Birmingham in 1773; the most recent is that edited, with an Introduction and Notes, by the Rev. W. M. Hatch for Longmans and Co. in 1870, of which, owing to the untimely death of the Editor, only one volume was published.

But, in addition to the works which he intended for publication, several letters of the Author of the *Characteristics* have at various times found their way into print. The earliest collection of this kind was that entitled *Several Letters written by a Noble Lord to a Young Man at the University*, first printed in 1716. By whom they were published I am not aware. They are addressed to Michael Ainsworth, a student at University College, Oxford, who had been taken, as a child, out of a poor and numerous family into Shaftes-

bury's household. The Earl, "finding his ingenuity," "employed him in nothing servile," but "put him abroad to the best schools." At first he was destined for some other profession, but, "the serious temper of the lad disposing him to the ministry," his patron maintained him at the University and enabled him to carry out his wishes.<sup>1</sup> These are the only published letters of Shaftesbury which, from a literary and philosophical point of view, present much interest. They breathe the same disinterested love of God and Virtue which are so distinctive of the *Characteristics*, and, being written with more freedom and, apparently, with no design of being published, they present the author in a less formal light, and more, as it were, at home. "Honest Michael," as he is generally called in the originals, must have been much delighted with these scraps of his patron's philosophy, and still more with the interest which the great man took in his studies and difficulties. Shaftesbury seems much pleased at his protégé having been bold enough to commence the study of Greek. "'Twas providential, surely, that I should happen once to speak to you of the Greek language; when you asked concerning the foundations of learning, and the source and fountain of those lights we have, whether in morality or divinity." "I pray God prosper you in your daring attempt, and bless you with true modesty and simplicity in all the other endeavours and practices of your life, as you have had courage and mighty boldness in this one."<sup>2</sup> Michael had fallen across Simplicius' *Commentary on Epictetus*, and expressed the pleasure with which he had read it. No description of study could be more acceptable to his patron than

<sup>1</sup> Copy of a letter to Bishop Burnet, dated May 23, 1710, introducing the youth as a candidate for Holy Orders, in Shaftesbury Papers, Bundle 22, No. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Letter V.

this. For Shaftesbury, like Epictetus himself, thinks little of learning which has no ethical end, which "has not a direct tendency to render us honester, milder, juster, and better." He recommends Michael to suspend for a while his reading of Epictetus, and to study, as more within his compass, the *Table* of Cebes, the easier portions of Marcus Antoninus, and the First and Second *Alcibiades* of Plato. But he must not be so absorbed by his studies as to neglect his health. "For never do we more need a just cheerfulness, good humour, or alacrity of mind, than when we are contemplating God and Virtue. So that it may be assigned as one cause of the austerity and harshness of some men's divinity, that in their habit of mind, and by that very morose and sour temper which they contract with their hard studies, they make the idea of God so much after the pattern of their own bitter spirit." In this same letter (the most interesting of the series), the master advises his pupil, whose "endeavour and hope it is to know God and goodness," to lay aside all fear, "which is so wholly unworthy of God, and so debasing to his standard of reason," and "to look impartially into all authors, and upon all nations, and into all parts of learning and human life; to seek and find out the true *pulchrum*, the *honestum*, the *καλόν*, by which standard and measure we may know God, and know how to praise him, when we have learnt what is praise-worthy." "Be this your search," he continues, "and by these means and by this way I have shewn you. Seek for the *καλόν* in every thing, beginning as low as the plants, the fields, or even the common arts of mankind, to see what is beauteous, and what contrary. Thus, and by the original fountains you are arrived to, you will, under providence, attain beauty and true wisdom for yourself, being true to virtue: and so God prosper you."

Among the most interesting features of these letters are

the apparently discordant passages which they contain on Locke. In the first letter, after decrying the "riddles of the schoolmen," he proceeds to say: "However, I am not sorry that I lent you Mr. Locke's *Essay of Human Understanding*; which may as well qualify for business and the world, as for the sciences and an university. No one has done more towards the recalling of philosophy from barbarity into use and practice of the world. No one has opened a better and clearer way to reasoning." Above all, his attempt to bring the use of reason into religion ought to be welcomed by Church of England men, as furnishing them with the only weapon with which they can combat visionaries and enthusiasts. But, in the eighth letter, there occurs an elaborate attack on Locke's philosophy, especially on his ethical theories, and on his rejection of innate or, as Shaftesbury would prefer to call them, *connatural* ideas. "Mr. Locke, as much as I honour him on account of other writings (namely, on government, policy, trade, coin, education, toleration, &c.), and as well as I knew him, and can answer for his sincerity as a most zealous Christian and believer, did however go in the self-same track" as Hobbes, "and is followed by the Tindals, and all the other ingenious free authors of our time." "'Twas Mr. Locke that struck the home blow: for Mr. Hobbes' character and base slavish principles in government took off the poison of his philosophy. 'Twas Mr. Locke that struck at all fundamentals, threw all order and virtue out of the world, and made the very ideas of these (which are the same as those of God) *unnatural*, and without foundation in our minds.'" The passage is too long to quote at length, but it is the less necessary that I should do so, as I shall have occasion to recur to the subject in a subsequent chapter.<sup>3</sup> It may be enough

<sup>3</sup> See ch. 3, pp. 100—102.

to say here that I can see no inconsistency between these two judgments. In the first passage, Shaftesbury is commending Locke's style and method, his treating philosophical questions not as a pedant but as a man of the world, and his insisting on the competence of reason to deal with all questions alike, as well of religion and morals as of philosophy and common life. In the second passage, he is combating Locke's particular account of the origin of our moral and religious ideas and of the ultimate source of moral obligations. On these points, Shaftesbury's system differed fundamentally from that of Locke, and, therefore, we need feel no surprise that, when he has occasion to compare the two, he speaks with warmth and with a full consciousness of the issues at stake, much as he might esteem the character of his old master and even the general tone and spirit of the *Essay*.

The originals of most of these letters were added some years ago to the Shaftesbury Papers, as well as a few other letters to Ainsworth, which, however, are not of much importance. Letter VI. of the printed series is wanting, as well as Letter IX., though most of the concluding paragraph of the latter occurs in a letter dated May 8 [? 1710]. Letter X. has been considerably tampered with. The bulk of the original letter refers exclusively to private matters, such as the position which Ainsworth was to occupy, as Chaplain, in Shaftesbury's family. The paragraphs on the high-church clergy, their "insolence, riot, pride, presumption," &c., have been transferred from another letter written to Ainsworth, when he was about to enter Priest's orders. This letter was dated Reigate, 11 May, 1711. A copy of it is contained in a letter-book, Shaftesbury Papers, Bundle 22, No. 7. The omitted portions of Letter X. are interesting, as illustrating the social position of the Clergy at that time. Shaftesbury was evidently anxious to do all in his power to further the

interests and increase the consideration of young Ainsworth. For that purpose, he determined to give his *protégé* a good start in his profession, by taking him into his own household, in the capacity of chaplain. Michael, whose poor parents, we must recollect, were probably still living in the parish, was occasionally to dine at my Lord's own table, and at all times was to have "the convenience of the second table, with those of good condition and gentile circumstances." This advantageous offer is made, "not fearing that you will receive any prejudice by it in your modesty and humility."

In 1721, Toland published a small volume of letters, with a somewhat lengthy introduction. This collection contains fourteen letters from Shaftesbury to Molesworth, together with two from Sir John Cropley, Shaftesbury's intimate friend, also addressed to Molesworth. These letters are interesting as illustrating Shaftesbury's political relations during the years 1708 and 1709, but they relate chiefly to his unsuccessful love-affair with the daughter of the "old lord," and his subsequent marriage with Miss Ewer. They ought certainly never to have been published during the lifetime of the two ladies, and we need feel no surprise at the bitter terms in which the Fourth Earl speaks of the editor. Toland was a swaggering Irishman, who bragged of his acquaintance with men like Locke and Shaftesbury, often exaggerating mere notice or friendliness into intimacy.<sup>4</sup> Being in needy circumstances, there is no doubt he was under a strong temptation to turn a penny by writing or

<sup>4</sup> See the correspondence between Molyneux and Locke, in 1697, where there are several paragraphs referring to Toland's conduct in Ireland. See also Limborch to Locke, Aug. 3, 1699; Sept. 5, 1699. Limborch complains that, though he had never seen him, Toland boasted of his acquaintance and confidence.

editing books in season and out of season, but this particular offence was unpardonable. He had received much kindness from Shaftesbury, as well probably as from Molesworth, and he has the effrontery to own that the latter had no intention, in presenting him with the letters, that he should publish them so soon.

In the account of Shaftesbury in the *General Dictionary*, an extract from a letter to Stringer, and two letters addressed respectively to Lord Oxford and Lord Godolphin were published for the first time. From two of these I have already made quotations.

In 1746, and again in 1750 and 1758, all these letters were published together in one volume. The last named edition, which counts as the fourth volume of an edition of the *Characteristics*, also contains the Preface to Dr. Whichcote's *Sermons*.

A volume, entitled *Original Letters of Locke, Sidney, and Shaftesbury*, was published by Mr. T. Forster in 1830, and an enlarged edition, by his permission, in 1847. Mr. Forster's grandfather, Edward Forster of Walthamstow, had married a grand-daughter of Benjamin Furly, an English merchant in Rotterdam, whose name has already occurred so frequently in these pages. As Shaftesbury's letters are all addressed to Furly himself, his sons, or his clerk, Harry Wilkinson, there could be little doubt of their authenticity, even if the originals were not extant. But, with a few exceptions, the originals, which are undoubtedly in Shaftesbury's handwriting, are now included amongst the Shaftesbury Papers in the Record Office. In addition to these, there are in the same collection, a few other letters addressed to Furly, interesting as specimens of the epistolary correspondence of the time, though not of much intrinsic importance. The letters



to Furly himself are mainly political, and illustrate Shaftesbury's zeal for liberty, his affection for the Dutch States, his fear and hatred of France, and the eagerness with which he welcomed and clung to the Grand Alliance.<sup>5</sup> They betray the keenest sense of an identity of interests between England and Holland, a feeling which was no doubt reciprocated by Furly, and which mainly accounts for the frequency of the correspondence. But these letters not only exhibit Shaftesbury's patriotism and passion for liberty, but also his kindness of heart and love of his friends. His affection and respect for the Furly family, and his interest in all their doings are apparent throughout. Still more, perhaps, are we struck with these amiable characteristics in the letters to Harry Wilkinson and the two young Furlys. He is ever ready to guide, advise, or help them, and he writes not in the conventional manner of a patron, but with a genuine human concern for them and their affairs. Perhaps, in his correspondence with Wilkinson, as in that with Ainsworth, he harps too frequently, for our taste, on the virtues of humility, modesty, and obedience, but then, in those times, these were subjects on which elders spoke more freely to their juniors than we do in ours. It might be well, perhaps, for the young men of our day, if parents and instructors, instead of constantly goading their ambition, would occasionally address to them some such wholesome language as this: "I had rather at any time receive from you one sound proof of your honesty, fidelity, good nature, modesty, and humility, than a thousand of your ability, good fortune, and success."

<sup>5</sup> Most of these letters are unsigned. In a letter dated Aug. 5 [1700], Shaftesbury says: "With a little caution, one may write anything by the post; only 'tis best not to put a name to it, for we know one another's hands, and, though others may know them, yet it is not the same advantage to them, as when they have the name."

So far as I am aware, I have now given an account of all the published letters of Shaftesbury, except the letter to Le Clerc on his recollections of Locke, which was published in *Notes and Queries*, Feb. 8, 1851, and from which I quoted at the beginning of the last chapter.

The Preface to Dr. Whichcote's *Sermons* was written in 1698, when Shaftesbury was only twenty-eight years of age. What is mainly interesting in it is to find that he has already adopted the Benevolent Theory of Morals. Whichcote's *Sermons* had attracted him by the favourable light in which they represented human nature, by their frank recognition of a "secret sympathy" in man with virtue and honesty, and by the contrast which they thus offered to the philosophical teaching of Hobbes and the theological teaching of the Calvinistic divines. Hobbes, "in reckoning up the passions or affections by which men are held together in society, forgot to mention kindness, friendship, sociableness, love of company and converse, natural affection, or anything of this kind." The Calvinistic divines, in order to support their distorted scheme of theology, had magnified the corruption of the human heart. But "our excellent divine, and truly Christian philosopher," by appearing "in defence of natural goodness," may be called "the preacher of good nature."

Of the treatises composing the *Characteristics*, the first is entitled "A Letter concerning Enthusiasm." The circumstances which occasioned its production have already been mentioned. It is somewhat rambling and inconsecutive, and partakes more of the nature of an ephemeral pamphlet than of a philosophical treatise, though, at the same time, it must be acknowledged that it contains individual passages of

great force, and even beauty. The main thesis is that there is a true and a false enthusiasm, and that the only way of distinguishing between them is by applying the test of ridicule. To judge of anything aright, especially in matters of religion and morality, we must be in a good humour. "Good Humour is not only the best security against Enthusiasm, but the best foundation of Piety and True Religion." "Nothing beside ill humour, either natural or forced, can bring a man to think seriously that the world is governed by any 'devilish or malicious power,'" and it is ill humour, he thinks, which is the cause of atheism. Opinions which claim to be exempted from raillery and from discussion afford presumptive evidence of their falsity. "Gravity is of the very essence of Imposture." So far as ridicule and raillery add point and illustration to an argument, we may go along with Shaftesbury. But it must not be forgotten that ridicule, especially when applied to sacred matters, is, from mere force of contrast, very easily excited, and that many opinions, of which we have no reasonable doubt, might, with a little dexterity, be represented in the most ludicrous light. The fact that a practice or opinion is open to ridicule is only an argument against it, when, underlying the ridicule, there is some valid reason, which admits of being stated in a sober, though perhaps a less pointed, form. Ridicule, in fact, is a weapon of rhetoric rather than of logic; useful indeed, but requiring justification for its employment.

Less open to question are the attacks which Shaftesbury makes in this treatise on unworthy notions of God and on the spirit of religious persecution. We can only know God aright, when we have learnt to distinguish between what is praise-worthy and blame-worthy in ourselves. "Methinks it would be well for us, if, before we ascended into the higher

regions of Divinity, we would vouchsafe to descend a little into ourselves, and bestow some poor thoughts upon plain, honest Morals. When we had once looked into ourselves, and distinguished well the nature of our own affections, we should probably be fitter judges of the Divineness of a character, and discern better what affections were suitable or unsuitable to a perfect being. We might then understand how to love or praise, when we had acquired some consistent notion of what was laudable or lovely." "Reason, if we will trust to it, will demonstrate to us, that God is so good as to exceed the very best of us in Goodness. And after this manner we can have no dread or suspicion to render us uneasy; for it is Malice only, and not Goodness, which can make us afraid." To attempt to bring about uniformity in religious beliefs by legal compulsion is at once to fan the spirit of sectarianism and to check the growth of a true theology. "If Magistracy should vouchsafe to interpose thus much in other sciences, I am afraid we should have as bad Logic, as bad Mathematics, and in every kind as bad Philosophy, as we often have Divinity in countries where a precise orthodoxy is settled by law." "To prescribe bounds to Fancy and Speculation, to regulate men's apprehensions and religious beliefs or fears, to suppress by violence the natural passion of Enthusiasm, or to endeavour to ascertain it, or reduce it to one species, or bring it under any one modification, is in truth no better sense, nor deserves a better character, than what the Comedian declares of the like project in the affair of love—

Nihilo plus agas

Quam si des operam ut cum ratione insanias." <sup>6</sup>

History has shown that Ridicule, and not Punishment, is

<sup>6</sup> Terence, *Eun.* Act I. Sc. 1.

the most effective weapon against Fanaticism. "It was heretofore the wisdom of some wise nations, to let people be fools as much as they pleased, and never to punish seriously what deserved only to be laughed at, and was, after all, best cured by that innocent remedy."

The second treatise, on the "Freedom of Wit and Humour," 2) is even more desultory than the first. Its main object seems to be to defend the position taken up in the Letter on Enthusiasm, that false or dangerous opinions are best disposed of by raillery and ridicule. But the author wanders into a discussion on the moral and political system of Hobbes, to which he applies with much effect his favourite weapon of banter, and, in opposition to it, starts his own theories, more fully and formally developed in the subsequent treatises,—of the origin of society in the family relation, of the reality and disinterested character of the benevolent affections, and of the analogy between art and virtue or the applicability to human actions and human characters of the idea of beauty. As all these topics will come before us in the next chapter, where I shall consider at length Shaftesbury's ethical system, it is unnecessary to dwell upon them here. In discussing his main topic, Shaftesbury remarks very well that "it is the persecuting spirit that has raised the bantering one," and that, though he can "very well suppose men may be frightened out of their wits, he has no apprehension they should be laughed out of them." It may be noticed that this treatise contains a covert sneer at the Christian Scriptures for not recognizing the virtues of private friendship and public spirit. The relations of Christ to his Apostles, and of the Apostles and first preachers of Christianity to one another, surely supply examples of some of the closest and most sacred friendships which have ever obtained among men. Patriotism is un-

doubtedly a virtue of which it is not easy to find traces in the New Testament, but, when all the world was under one empire, there could be little opportunity for the display of public spirit amongst the subject races, unless it took the form of opposition to the existing government, an opposition which, in all probability, would have been not only futile but most disastrous to the interests of the country in which it originated. *But of Spain to the Romans.*

31 The treatise, third in order, is entitled "Soliloquy, or Advice to an Author." Under this vague title are included a number of miscellaneous reflections, the connexion of which is sometimes not very obvious. The importance of self-converse and self-knowledge; the character of the classical Dialogue; the advantages which would accrue to kings and nobles from bestowing a liberal and discriminating patronage on arts and letters; the value and history of criticism; a comparison of the different styles which obtained in Greek Literature; the spirit of truthfulness which ought to guide the good workman, whether in art, letters, or actions; the worthlessness of the school logic and philosophy, and its powerlessness in directing the conduct of life; the superiority of ethical to all other knowledge, and of the gratification of the benevolent affections to all other pleasures; the parallelism between beauty of external form and beauty of character, a correct taste in art and in morals; the foundation in nature, as distinct from mere fashion and custom, of both ethical and æsthetic distinctions: these are among the various topics, discussed with much ease, but with rather too much prolixity, in this third Treatise. Speaking of it in the Miscellaneous Reflections, the author himself says of it: "His pretence has been to advise Authors and polish Styles; but his aim has been to correct Manners, and regulate Lives." The

literary character of the piece is disfigured by the irrelevant introduction at the end of some scoffing remarks on religious controversy and the heroes of the Old Testament. Those who are familiar with the writings of Mr. Ruskin will find that Shaftesbury maintains with him that it is only the good man who can be the good artist. "For Knavery is mere dissonance and disproportion," and, as Strabo says,<sup>7</sup> "it is impossible to be a good poet, unless you are first a good man."

Another peculiar feature in the Treatise is the scorn which Shaftesbury pours on the prevalent taste for reading books of strange adventure and descriptions of barbarous countries. The scientific interest which now attaches to the manners, opinions, and institutions of savages had, at that time, been only imperfectly awakened, and the significance of the study of primæval man was understood but by few writers, and by them but very imperfectly. A rude love of the grotesque and the marvellous was what probably attracted most readers to this kind of literature, and hence, valuable as are the fruits which have since resulted from this taste, the reproof was then by no means undeserved.

The Second Volume contains the two treatises which, from the point of view of the Moralist, are far the most important in the work. The "Inquiry concerning Virtue or Merit," which constitutes the fourth treatise, may be regarded as Shaftesbury's formal contribution to the Science of Ethics. It raises the questions, What is Virtue; Wherein consists the Obligation to it; What are its relations to Religion, to Society, and to the Individual. As the answers to these questions, and Shaftesbury's moral system generally, will be examined at length in the succeeding chapter, it would simply involve

<sup>7</sup> οὐχ οἶόν τε ἀγαθὸν γενέσθαι ποιητὴν, μὴ πρότερον γεννηθέντα ἄνδρα ἀγαθόν. Strabo, Bk. I., ch. 2, quoted by Shaftesbury.

repetition were I to enter upon them here. I shall, therefore, at present dismiss this treatise, merely remarking that no one wishing to acquaint himself even superficially with the history of moral speculation in England, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, can afford to pass it by without a careful reading.

The *Moralists*, "a Philosophical Rhapsody," as it is entitled, is thrown into the form of a Dialogue, and is obviously written in imitation of the Dialogues of Plato. This form of composition had already been applied to the discussion of questions of philosophy and natural theology in the *Divine Dialogues* of Dr. Henry More, and was soon to be rendered famous by the Dialogues of Bishop Berkeley, whose *Hylas and Philonous* was published four years after the first appearance of the *Moralists*. With the exception of a few pages at the beginning and the end, the interest is well sustained throughout. Bishop Hurd says that, in English, there are three dialogues, and but three, that are fit to be mentioned, namely, the *Moralists* of Lord Shaftesbury, Mr. Addison's *Treatise on Medals*, and the *Minute Philosopher* of Bishop Berkeley; but he goes on to blame them all for using fictitious, instead of real, characters.<sup>8</sup> As the Inquiry concerning Virtue is Shaftesbury's principal contribution to Ethics, so the *Moralists* is mainly intended to unfold his views on Religion and Theology. It is an elaborate exposition of Theism and Optimism, with occasional excursions into the domains of Art and Morals. Leibnitz, whose *Théodicée* was published in the following year (1710), was surprised to find that the most striking features of his own theories of God and the Universe had been anticipated before

<sup>8</sup> Preface to the *Moral and Political Dialogues*, quoted in the Article on Shaftesbury in the *Biographia Britannica*.



his book saw the light.<sup>9</sup> Shaftesbury, in the person of Theocles, expounds his optimistic system, and, as an example of legitimate enthusiasm, breaks out into a passionate address, a sort of prose hymn, to Nature and her Author. His faults of style (of which I shall speak presently) are conspicuous even in this Dialogue, but yet there is an undoubted charm about it, and to the student of the history of English literature it is peculiarly interesting on account of its connexion with Pope's *Essay on Man*. The philosophical and theological views which it embodies I must reserve for examination in future chapters.

The Third Volume, in the original edition, was entirely occupied with the piece entitled "Miscellaneous Reflections." Curiously enough, this piece is described in the later editions of the *Characteristics* as having been first printed in the year 1714, though it was then merely reprinted, with hardly any alterations, from the first edition of 1711. It was designed partly to defend, partly to supplement the treatises which had preceded it. In the second Miscellany, Shaftesbury takes great pains to show that he had not intended, in his first Treatise, to decry Enthusiasm generally and absolutely, but only the abuses and misapplications of it. "So far is the Author from degrading Enthusiasm, or disclaiming it in himself, that he looks on this passion as the most natural, and its object as the justest in the world. Even Virtue itself he takes to be no other than a noble Enthusiasm justly directed,

<sup>9</sup> J'y ai trouvé d'abord presque toute ma *Théodicée* (mais plus agréablement tournée) avant qu'elle eût vu le jour. . . . Si j'avois vu cet ouvrage avant la publication de ma *Théodicée*, j'en aurois profité comme il faut, et j'en aurois emprunté de grands passages." Des Maizeaux, *Recueil de diverses Pièces par M. Leibnitz, &c.*, tome ii., p. 283.

and regulated by that high standard which he supposes is the nature of things.”<sup>1</sup> The philosophical value of the piece is marred by digressions on such subjects as the derivation of the Jewish religion from the Egyptian, the policy of the Church of Rome, the self-seeking of the clergy, &c. But, notwithstanding the desultory character of these miscellaneous reflections, they are easy and agreeable reading, and contain several passages which illustrate or give point to the more formal discussions in the fourth and fifth treatises. In Misc. III., ch. 2, for example, there occurs a peculiarly happy statement of one of Shaftesbury’s most distinctive doctrines: “Thus we see, after all, that ’tis not merely what we call Principle, but a Taste, which governs men. They may think for certain, ‘This is right, or that wrong.’ They may believe ‘This a crime, or that a sin; This punishable by man, or that by God.’ Yet, if the savour of things lies cross to Honesty, if the Fancy be florid, and the Appetite high towards the subaltern beauties and lower order of worldly symmetries and proportions, the conduct will infallibly turn this latter way.” In Misc. IV., ch. 1, he somewhat ostentatiously proclaims his indifference to Metaphysics, and assumes the position afterwards taken by what is called the “Common-sense” Philosophers. “There is no impediment, hindrance, or suspension of action, on account of these wonderfully refined speculations” about our own existence and personal identity. “Argument and debate go on still. Conduct is settled. Rules and measures are given out and received. Nor do we scruple to act as resolutely upon the mere supposition that *we are*, as if we had effectually proved it a thousand times to the full satisfaction of our metaphysical or Pyrrhonian antagonist.” “It is in a manner, necessary,” he adds in the next chapter, “for one who would usefully philosophize, to have a

<sup>1</sup> Misc. II., ch. 1.

knowledge in this part of Philosophy sufficient to satisfy him that there is no knowledge or wisdom to be learnt from it. For of this truth nothing besides experience and study will be able fully to convince him." The proper study of mankind is conduct, its sources, its sanctions, and its kinds, with a view to practice. The individual man, however, can only be understood as a portion of a larger system. Hence, our main business is to determine what course of action is natural and becoming to him in his relations to his fellow-men and to the Universe of which he is a part. But Virtue, as exhibited mainly in the social affections, is "his natural good, and Vice his misery and ill."

In the less philosophical portions of the Treatise, Shaftesbury severely criticises the sensational character of the English Drama, "that monstrous ornament which we call rhyme," and the ruggedness of style prevalent amongst English authors. This last, he thinks, might be remedied by "a more natural and easy disengagement of their periods," and by "a careful avoiding the encounter of the shocking consonants and jarring sounds to which our language is so unfortunately subject."

The Miscellaneous Reflections conclude with a vigorous defence of "free-thinking" and of an impartial criticism of the history and contents of the sacred text. Shaftesbury takes his stand on the common platform of Protestantism, and, with great effect, quotes passages from Jeremy Taylor and Tillotson on the uncertainty of theological tradition and the necessity of referring all disputed evidence to the supreme judgment of the Reason. But, while claiming this liberty for others, the author, with something of a grimace which must have been more provoking than reassuring to his clerical antagonists, protests that he has never, "in practice, acquitted himself otherwise than as a just conformist to the

lawful church," and that he is "fully assured of his own steady orthodoxy, resignation, and entire submission to the truly Christian and Catholic doctrines of our Holy Church, as by Law established." This language must not be regarded as altogether ironical. But of Shaftesbury's religious sentiments, and the equivocal attitude in which he stood towards the Established Church, I shall have occasion to speak in a subsequent chapter.

The second and succeeding editions of the *Characteristics* contain a Seventh Treatise, written in Italy towards the close of Shaftesbury's life. It is of a purely æsthetic character, and is entitled "A Notion of the Historical Draught or Tablature of the Judgment of Hercules." The object of the piece is to suggest, for the use of the painter, a delineation of the meeting between Hercules and the two goddesses, Virtue and Pleasure, as described in the story of Prodicus which is related in the second book of Xenophon's *Memorabilia*. The suggestions show that Shaftesbury possessed considerable skill as a connoisseur, and that he was deeply interested both in Art and Classical Literature. Accompanying this piece, which was sent to Lord Somers, was "A Letter concerning the Art or Science of Design," the general publication of which seems to have been delayed till it appeared in the edition of the *Characteristics* issued in 1732.<sup>2</sup> The letter is, perhaps, more interesting than the treatise. It is curious to find Shaftesbury, about eleven years before the birth of Reynolds and fifteen before that of Gainsborough, prophesying that, if the war were followed by a suitable peace (though the peace of Utrecht, I am bound to add, would by no means have com-

<sup>2</sup> See p. 32. The Fourth Earl, in his MS. Life, complains that this letter had not yet been published, though it had been his father's express wish to have it printed immediately.

mended itself to him as satisfying this condition), "the figure we are like to make abroad, and the increase of knowledge, industry, and sense at home, will render United Britain the principal seat of arts." It is equally curious to find him condemning the works of Sir Christopher Wren, especially Hampton Court and St. Paul's, and thinking that "the many spires arising in our great city, with such hasty and sudden growth, may be the occasion that our immediate relish shall be hereafter censured, as retaining much of what artists call the Gothic kind." Perhaps it was this unfavourable criticism of Wren, who long survived Shaftesbury, that occasioned the delay in the publication of the letter.

Shaftesbury, it is plain, took great pains in the elaboration of his style, and he succeeded so far as to make his meaning transparent. The thought is always clear. We are spared the trouble of deciding between different interpretations of his doctrines, a process so wearisome in the case of most philosophical authors. But, on the other hand, he did not equally succeed in attaining elegance, an object at which he seems equally to have aimed. There is a curious affectation about his style, a falsetto note, which, notwithstanding all his efforts to please, is often irritating to the reader. The main characteristic of Shaftesbury's style is, perhaps, best hit off by Charles Lamb, when he calls it "genteel." He poses too much as a fine gentleman, and is so anxious not to be taken for a pedant of the vulgar, scholastic kind, that he falls into the hardly more attractive pedantry of the æsthete and *virtuoso*. The *limæ labor* is almost everywhere apparent. The efforts at raillery and humour are sometimes so forced as to lose their effect, and he is too apt to inform his reader beforehand, when he is about to put on his light and airy manner. As

Dr. Blair says,<sup>3</sup> "He is stiff even in his pleasantry, and laughs in form like an author, and not like a man." We often feel inclined to say: Why this stilted phraseology? Why all this art and contrivance? Surely the natural frame of mind and the natural course of conduct, of which he speaks so much, would be most fittingly commended in natural tones and simple language. But, notwithstanding all these defects, which are, I think, unduly exaggerated by some of Shaftesbury's critics, he possesses the great merits of being easily read and easily understood. There is, perhaps, no other English philosopher whose works can be read so rapidly, or whose leading ideas can be appropriated with equal facility, by a student of average intelligence. Hence, probably, the wide popularity which his works enjoyed in the last century; and hence, undoubtedly, the agreeable feeling with which, notwithstanding all their false taste and their tiresome digressions, they still impress the modern reader.

<sup>3</sup> *Lectures on Rhetoric.* Lect. XIX.

## CHAPTER III.

## SHAFTESBURY'S ETHICAL THEORY.

SHAFTESBURY is emphatically a Moral Philosopher. Metaphysical inquiries, as we have seen, he regarded as fruitless, and to Psychology, except so far as it afforded a basis for Ethics, he paid no attention. Logic he probably despised as merely an instrument of pedants. And, though the main object of the *Moralists* is to propound a system of Natural Theology, yet, with Shaftesbury, morals and religion are so interdependent, that this Dialogue may, perhaps, justly be viewed as simply extending and confirming the argument contained in the *Inquiry concerning Virtue*. What the constitution of Man was designed to be, and ought to be, that the constitution of Nature actually is. Hence Virtue obtains the sanction of Religion, while Religion itself is but the recognition and imitation of Supreme Goodness.

The leading ideas in Shaftesbury's ethical theory are that of a system or the relation of parts to a whole, Benevolence, Moral Beauty, and a Moral Sense. The individual man himself is a system, consisting of various appetites, passions, and affections, all united under the supreme control of reason. Of this system, the parts are so nicely adjusted to each other, that any disarrangement or disproportion, however slight, may mar and disfigure the whole. "Whoever is the least versed in this moral kind of Architecture will find the inward fabric so adjusted, and the whole so nicely built, that

the barely extending of a single passion a little too far, or the continuance of it too long, is able to bring irrecoverable ruin and misery.”<sup>1</sup> “It may be said properly to be the same with the affections or passions in an animal-constitution, as with the chords or strings of a musical instrument. If these, though in ever so just proportion one to another, are strained beyond a certain degree, ’tis more than the instrument will bear: the lute or lyre is abused, and its effect lost. On the other hand, if, while some of the strings are duly strained, others are not wound up to their due proportion, then is the instrument still in disorder and its part ill performed. The several species of creatures are like different sorts of instruments. And even in the same species of creatures (as in the same sort of instrument) one is not entirely like the other, nor will the same strings fit each. The same degree of strength which winds up one, and fits the several strings to a just harmony and consort, may in another burst both the strings and instrument itself. Thus, men who have the liveliest sense, and are the easiest affected with pain or pleasure, have need of the strongest influence or force of other affections, such as *Tenderness*, *Love*, *Sociableness*, *Compassion*, in order to preserve a right *Balance* within, and to maintain them in their duty, and in the just performance of their part; whilst others, who are of a cooler blood, or lower key, need not the same allay or counterpart, nor are made by nature to feel those tender and endearing affections in so exquisite a degree.”<sup>2</sup>

But morality and human nature cannot be adequately studied in the system of the individual man. There are parts in that system, both mental and bodily, which have an

<sup>1</sup> Inquiry concerning Virtue, Book II., Part 2, § 1.

<sup>2</sup> Inquiry, Book II., Pt. 1, § 3.



evident respect to something outside it. Neither Man, nor any other animal, though ever so complete a system of parts as to all within, can be allowed in the same manner complete as to all without; but must be considered as having a further relation abroad to the System of his Kind. So even this System of his Kind to the Animal System; this to the World (our Earth); and this again to the bigger world and to the Universe.<sup>3</sup> No being can properly be called good or ill, except in reference to the systems of which he is a part. "Should a historian or traveller describe to us a certain creature of a more solitary disposition than ever was yet heard of; one who had neither mate nor fellow of any kind, nothing of his own likeness towards which he stood well affected or inclined, nor anything without or beyond himself for which he had the least passion or concern: we might be apt to say perhaps, without much hesitation, 'That this was doubtless a very melancholy creature, and that in this unsociable and sullen state he was like to have a very disconsolate kind of life.' But if we were assured that, notwithstanding all appearances, the creature enjoyed himself extremely, had a great relish of life, and was in nothing wanting to his own good, we might acknowledge perhaps, 'That the Creature was no Monster, nor absurdly constituted as to himself.' But we should hardly, after all, be induced to say of him, 'That he was a *good* Creature.' However, should it be urged against us, 'That, such as he was, the creature was still perfect in himself, and therefore to be esteemed good; for what had he to do with others?': in this sense, indeed, we might be forced to acknowledge, 'That he was a good creature, if he could be understood to be absolute and complete in himself, without any real relation to anything

<sup>3</sup> *Moralists*, Part II., Sect. 4.

in the Universe besides.' For should there be anywhere in Nature a *System*, of which this living creature was to be considered as a part, then could he nowise be allowed *good*, whilst he plainly appeared to be such a *part* as made rather to the harm than good of that system or *whole* in which he was included."<sup>4</sup>

Before, then, we can pronounce on the goodness or badness of any being, we must know the relations in which it stands to other beings. Moreover, in a being capable of passions and affections, it is by these and not by its bodily structure that we estimate its worth. "So that, in a sensible creature, that which is not done through any affection at all makes neither good nor ill in the nature of that creature; who then only is supposed good, when the good or ill of the system to which he has relation is the immediate object of some passion or affection moving him."

"Whatsoever, therefore, is done which happens to be advantageous to the species, through an affection merely towards self-good, does not imply any more goodness in the creature, than as the affection itself is good. Let him, in any particular, act ever so well; if, at the bottom, it be that selfish affection alone which moves him, he is in himself still vicious. Nor can any creature be considered otherwise, when the passion towards self-good, though ever so moderate, is his real motive in the doing that to which a natural affection for his kind ought by right to have inclined him."

"When, in general, all the affections or passions are suited to the public good, or Good of the Species, then is the natural temper entirely good. If, on the contrary, any requisite passion be wanting, or if there be any one supernumerary or weak, or anywise disserviceable, or contrary to that main end;

<sup>4</sup> Inquiry, Bk. I., Pt. 2, § 1. The quotations which follow are selected from the same section.

then is the natural temper, and consequently the creature himself, in some measure corrupt and ill.”<sup>5</sup>

These passages, which are afterwards explained and qualified so as to include a reasonable self-regard amongst the conditions, though not amongst the constituents, of goodness, are sufficient to show that, in Shaftesbury's ethical system, Benevolence, if not the sole, is at least the principal moral virtue. Of the relation of Benevolence to Self-Regard in this system, however, I shall have occasion to speak expressly, when considering his test or criterion of right and wrong in actions.

The idea of a moral and social system, the parts of which are in a constant proportion to each other, and so nicely adjusted that the slightest disarrangement would mar the unity of the design, almost necessarily suggests an analogy between Morality and Art. As the beauty of an external object consists in a certain proportion between its parts, or in a certain harmony of colouring; so the beauty of a virtuous character consists in a certain proportion between the various affections, or in a certain harmonious blending of the various springs of action as they contribute to promote the great ends of our being. And similarly, I suppose, the beauty of a virtuous action may be explained as consisting in its relation to the virtuous character in which it has its source, or to the other acts of a virtuous life, or to the general condition of a virtuous state of society. This analogy between Art and Morality, or, as it may otherwise be expressed, between the beauty of external objects and the beauty of actions or characters, is never long absent from Shaftesbury's mind. I select two or three passages which exhibit the thought in a characteristic manner.

“Is there a natural Beauty of Figures? And is there not

<sup>5</sup> Book II., Pt. 1, § 3.

as natural a one of Actions? <sup>6</sup> No sooner the eye opens upon figures, the ear to sounds, than straight the Beautiful results, and Grace and Harmony are known and acknowledged. No sooner are actions viewed, no sooner the human affections and passions discerned (and they are most of them as soon discerned as felt) than straight an inward eye distinguishes, and sees the Fair and Shapely, the Amiable and Admirable, apart from the Deformed, the Foul, the Odious, or the Despicable. How is it possible therefore not to own that, as these distinctions have their foundation in Nature, the discernment itself is natural and from Nature alone? <sup>7</sup>

“By Gentlemen of Fashion I understand those to whom a natural good genius, or the force of good education, has given a sense of what is naturally graceful and becoming. Some by mere nature, others by art and practice, are masters of an ear in music, an eye in painting, a fancy in the ordinary things of ornament and grace, a judgment in proportions of all kinds, and a general good taste in most of those subjects which make the amusement and delight of the ingenious people of the world. Let such gentlemen as these be as extravagant as they please, or as irregular in their morals; they must, at the same time, discover their inconsistency, live at variance with themselves, and in contradiction to that principle on which they ground their highest pleasure and entertainment. Of all other Beauties which *Vir-  
tuosos* pursue, Poets celebrate, Musicians sing, and Architects or Artists, of whatever kind, describe or form, the most de-

<sup>6</sup> Cp. Cicero, *De Officiis*, Lib. I., Cap. 4. “Eorum ipsorum, quæ adspectu sentiuntur, nullum aliud animal pulchritudinem, venustatem, convenientiam partium sentit. Quam similitudinem natura ratioque ab oculis ad animum transferens, multo etiam magis pulchritudinem, constantiam, ordinem in consiliis factisque conservandum putat.”

<sup>7</sup> *Moralists*, Part III., Sect. 2.

lightful, the most engaging and pathetic, is that which is drawn from real life and from the passions. Nothing affects the heart like that which is purely from itself and of its own nature; such as the Beauty of Sentiments, the Grace of Actions, the Turn of Characters, and the Proportions and Features of a Human Mind.”<sup>8</sup>

“One who aspires to the character of a man of breeding and politeness is careful to form his judgment of arts and sciences upon right models of perfection. If he travels to Rome, he enquires which are the truest pieces of architecture, the best remains of statues, the best paintings of a Raphael or a Carache. However antiquated, rough, or dismal they may appear to him at first sight, he resolves to view them over and over, till he has brought himself to relish them and find their hidden graces and perfections. He takes particular care to turn his eye from everything which is gaudy, luscious, and of a false taste. Nor is he less careful to turn his ear from every sort of music, besides that which is of the best manner and the truest harmony.

’Twere to be wished we had the same regard to a right Taste in life and manners. What mortal being, once convinced of a difference in inward character and of a preference due to one kind above another, would not be concerned to make his own the best? If Civility and Humanity be a Taste; if Brutality, Insolence, Riot be in the same manner a Taste: who, if he could reflect, would not choose to form himself on the amiable and agreeable rather than the odious and perverse model? Who would not endeavour to force Nature as well in this respect as in what relates to a Taste or Judgment in other arts and sciences? For, in each place, the force on Nature is used only for its redress. If a natural good Taste be not already formed in

<sup>8</sup> Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour, Part IV., Sect. 2.

us, why should not we endeavour to form it, and become *natural*?"<sup>9</sup>

Closely connected with the analogy between Art and Morality, as we may see indeed from the passages already quoted, is the idea that Morals, no less than Art, is a matter of Taste or Relish. To employ the author's own words, "The Taste of Beauty and the Relish of what is decent, just, and amiable, perfects the character of the Gentleman and the Philosopher. And the study of such a Taste or Relish will, as we suppose, be ever the great employment and concern of him who covets as well to be wise and good, as agreeable and polite.

"Quid Verum atque Decens curo et rogo, et omnis in hoc sum."<sup>1</sup>

This idea leads us to the last of the distinctive features which I noticed in Shaftesbury's ethical philosophy. The faculty which approves of right and disapproves of wrong actions is, with him, a Sense, and more than once he anticipates Hutcheson by calling it a "Moral Sense."<sup>2</sup> The "Relish," "Taste," or "Good-Taste," of which he speaks when comparing Morality with Art, however much it may have been improved by cultivation, originates in a "natural sense of Right and Wrong," a "Moral Sense," a "Sense of Just and Unjust, Worthy and Mean." "Sense of Right and Wrong" is "as natural to us as natural affection itself, and a first principle in our constitution and make." "And

<sup>9</sup> *Advice to an Author*, Part III., Sect. 3.

<sup>1</sup> *Miscellaneous Reflections*, Misc. 3, Ch. 1. - -

<sup>2</sup> This is the case, not in the margin alone, as Dr. Whewell seems to have thought, but once in the Text: "For, notwithstanding a man may through custom, or by licentiousness of practice, favoured by Atheism, come in time to lose much of his natural *moral sense*; yet" &c. *Inquiry*, Book I., Pt. 3, § 2. The expression occurs several times in the margin of Book I., Pt. 3.

this affection being an original one of earliest rise in the Soul or affectionate part, nothing beside contrary affection, by frequent check and control, can operate upon it, so as either to diminish it in part or destroy it in the whole."<sup>3</sup> These views are in accordance with the whole bent of Shaftesbury's mind. When he is discussing questions of Art, he does not attempt any refined analysis of our artistic judgments, but is content with appealing to a "Taste" or "Relish," which, however, requires cultivation. Similarly, in morality, almost the whole stress is laid on the benevolent affections and the "Moral Sense," while but little is said either of the controlling power of the Reason over the Passions, or of the share which the Reason takes in estimating the character of our acts. "Be persuaded," he says in one of his letters to Michael Ainsworth,<sup>4</sup> "that wisdom is more from the heart than from the head. Feel goodness, and you will see all things fair and good." At the same time, it would be erroneous to suppose that Shaftesbury entirely ignores the office of the reason in the moral economy. Witness the following passage, which contains an admirable statement of the mutual relations of the Will, the Desires, and the Reason. "Appetite, which is elder brother to Reason, being the lad of stronger growth, is sure, on every contest, to take the advantage of drawing all to his own side. And Will, so highly boasted, is, at best, merely a top or foot-ball between these youngsters; who prove very unfortunately matched, till the youngest, instead of now and then a kick or lash bestowed to little purpose, forsakes the ball or top itself, and begins to lay about his elder brother. 'Tis then that the scene changes. For the elder, like an arrant coward, upon this treatment,

<sup>3</sup> Inquiry, Book I., Part 3, § 1.

<sup>4</sup> Letters to a Young Man at the University, Letter VI.

presently grows civil, and affords the younger as fair play afterwards as he can desire.”<sup>5</sup>

Such are the leading traits of Shaftesbury’s moral system. It will be apparent at once to any reader familiar with speculations of this kind that the statement, so far as it has gone, leaves many important questions unanswered and many serious difficulties unsolved. I shall, therefore, supplement it, before proceeding to the task of criticism, by attempting to extract from Shaftesbury’s writings such answers as I can to what I conceive to be the fundamental questions of ethics. In making this attempt, one is constantly baffled by the absence of any systematic treatment, and by the want of depth and thoroughness which is so marked a defect in his whole way of thinking. His main aim appears to have been to represent virtue in an acceptable and attractive form to the man of taste and fashion, and hence he is far more concerned in drawing an analogy between art and morals, and in showing that moral appreciation is a “taste” or “relish,” than in attempting to determine accurately the moral criterion or to analyze with precision the moral sentiments. So far, however, as answers can be found, and, in some cases, there is substantially no doubt what the answer is, I believe that the following account may be taken as correctly expressing his views, even though he may not have consciously formulated for himself the questions to which I have endeavoured to supply the answers.

I. With respect to the practical test or criterion of right and wrong, that is to say the question, what is it which constitutes one act or feeling right and another wrong, the first remark to be made is that he says almost nothing of actions; what he almost exclusively concerns himself with, in this relation, being “temper” and character. As, however, character must give birth to actions, and a man’s actions are

<sup>5</sup> Advice to an Author, Part I., Sect. 2.



determined by his character, if we can ascertain what, in this system, is the test of a good or bad character, we shall also have ascertained what is the test of right or wrong action. Now, from the passages already cited, it might seem as if the only test of a good character, and, therefore, of a right action, were the fact of its commending itself to our "moral sense." But the "moral sense," as we shall see presently, must be educated. Hence, there must be some consideration or considerations external to itself, in accordance with which its education must be guided. However unconscious and automatic its judgments may ultimately become, they must, if they admit of guidance and rectification, be at first, at all events, consciously formed in accordance with some rule or principle. And this rule or principle, unless it be dictated by some arbitrary will, an alternative which Shaftesbury would have most emphatically rejected, must be based on some property or properties in the actions and characters themselves. There is one such property in characters and actions which Shaftesbury recognizes as at once supplying a test by which they may be judged and a standard by the constant application of which the organ of judgment itself, the "moral sense," may be trained and brought to perfection. This property is the tendency of a character, disposition, feeling, or action to promote the general good, or, as he usually phrases it, the "good of the species." That this is Shaftesbury's ultimate test of right and wrong, moral good and evil, the criterion by which the "moral sense" is or ought to be guided in its decisions, is abundantly evident from the whole tenor of his writings, but the following passages may be quoted as presenting the doctrine in a clear and emphatic form.

"To love the Public, to study universal Good, and to promote the interest of the whole world, as far as lies within our

power, is surely the Height of Goodness, and makes that temper which we call *Divine*.”<sup>6</sup>

Hence he infers that no description of the Deity, which represents him as otherwise than generous and benevolent, can be a true one.

“When, in general, all the affections or passions are suited to the public good, or good of the species, then is the natural temper entirely good.”<sup>7</sup>

“And having once the Good of our Species or Public in view, as our end or aim, ’tis impossible we should be misguided by any means to a false Apprehension or Sense of Right or Wrong.”<sup>8</sup>

Lastly, Philosophy itself is described as “the Study of Happiness,” and, consequently, “every one, in some manner or other, either skilfully or unskilfully philosophizes.”<sup>9</sup>

But, while a tendency to promote the general happiness is thus adopted as the test of character and action, the idea is nowhere practically applied, as it is by later writers, to the determination of disputed cases of conduct or the decision of rival claims between particular duties or particular virtues.

It should be noticed, in this connexion, that, though, from the stress which it lays on the exercise of the kindly feelings, Shaftesbury’s system is rightly called a Benevolent Theory of Morals, it by no means excludes a due regard to the preservation and interests of the individual. The relation of the self-regarding to the sympathetic affections is expressly determined in the following passage, which, notwithstanding its length, I think it useful to quote in full:—

“Now, as in particular cases, public affection, on the one

<sup>6</sup> Letter concerning Enthusiasm, Sect. 4.

<sup>7</sup> Inquiry concerning Virtue, Book I., Pt. 2, § 2.

<sup>8</sup> Inquiry, Book I., Pt. 3, § 2.

<sup>9</sup> Moralists, Part III., Sect. 3.

hand, may be too high; so private affection may, on the other hand, be too weak. For, if a creature be self-neglectful and insensible of danger, or if he want such a degree of passion in any kind as is useful to preserve, sustain, or defend himself; this must certainly be esteemed vicious, in regard of the design and end of Nature. She herself discovers this in her known method and stated rule of operation. 'Tis certain that her provisionary care and concern for the whole animal must at least be equal to her concern for a single part or member. Now, to the several parts she has given, we see, proper affections, suitable to their interest and security; so that, even without our consciousness, they act in their own defence, and for their own benefit and preservation. Thus an Eye, in its natural state, fails not to shut together of its own accord, unknowingly to us, by a peculiar caution and timidity; which if it wanted, however we might intend the preservation of our eye, we should not in effect be able to preserve it by any observation or forecast of our own. To be wanting, therefore, in those principal affections which respect the good of the whole constitution, must be a vice and imperfection, as great surely in the principal part, the Soul or Temper, as it is in any of those inferior and subordinate parts to want the self-preserving affections which are proper to them.

And thus the Affections towards Private Good become necessary and essential to Goodness. For, though no creature can be called good or virtuous merely for possessing these affections; yet, since it is impossible that the Public Good, or Good of the System, can be preserved without them, it follows that a creature really wanting in them is in reality wanting in some degree to goodness and natural rectitude, and may thus be esteemed vicious and defective."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Inquiry, Book II., Pt. 1, § 3.

The germ of thought in this passage is perfectly sound, but it might have been well, had Shaftesbury developed it further, and shown, in detail, how essential are sobriety, temperance, forethought, and the whole group of prudential virtues, as well as the much higher and more dignified virtue of self-respect, not only to the well-being of the individual himself, but also to the evolution, and indeed the very existence, of society. Sympathy and a sense of common interests are, doubtless, elements essential to knitting society together, but, unless the majority of men could be calculated on as having also a rational regard to their own individual interests, all social and political speculation would be futile, and society would soon be dissolved into chaos. It may be added that, if a creature cannot be called good or virtuous merely for possessing the self-regarding affections, neither could he be called good or virtuous, merely for possessing the benevolent affections, if self-regard were altogether wanting. A man who was habitually intemperate, however benevolent he might be, could no more be called good or virtuous, than a man, however temperate and self-restrained, who was habitually unkind or unjust.

II. As to the ultimate origin of the distinction between virtue and vice, right and wrong, Shaftesbury supplies a sufficiently explicit answer. The distinction is to be found in the original make of our nature. Apart from the reason (whose office is not initiative, but directive), the original elements of our moral nature consist of the self-regarding affections, the benevolent affections, and the moral sense. The first of these is recognized in all schemes of ethics, but it was the tendency of Hobbes' philosophy, which was at that time fashionable in England, to ignore or explain away the two latter. That they, however, are as much an original part of our nature as the first, is constantly and emphatically asserted

by Shaftesbury. A single passage will suffice to show how firmly he held and how clearly he stated this position.

"'Tis impossible to suppose a mere sensible creature originally so ill-constituted and unnatural as that, from the moment he comes to be tried by sensible objects, he should have no one good passion towards his kind, no foundation either of pity, love, kindness, or social affection. 'Tis full as impossible to conceive that a rational creature, coming first to be tried by rational objects, and receiving into his mind the images or representations of justice, generosity, gratitude, or other virtue, should have no *liking* of these, or *dislike* of their contraries; but be found absolutely indifferent towards whatsoever is presented to him of this sort. . . . . Nor can anything besides art and strong endeavour, with long practice and meditation, overcome such a natural prevention or prepossession of the mind in favour of this moral distinction."<sup>2</sup>

The reader should observe that there are two positions maintained in the above passage: 1st, that moral distinctions are natural, inasmuch as they are furnished by the moral sense, which, though reflective rather than initiative, is a natural and original part of man's mental constitution; 2nd, that the benevolent affections are independent springs of action equally with the self-regarding affections, and that, therefore, the extra-regarding virtues, justice, benevolence, and the like, are not capable of explanation as cunning disguises of self-interest, but have their roots in human nature itself. Like Plato and Aristotle, Shaftesbury finds the origin of society, not in individuals living as scattered units, but in the family relation :—

"This kind of society will not, surely, be denied to man, which to every beast of prey is known proper and natural.

<sup>2</sup> Inquiry, Book I., Pt. 3, § 1.

And can we allow this social part to man, and go no further? Is it possible he should pair, and live in love and fellowship with his partner and offspring, and remain still wholly wild, and speechless, and without those arts of storing, building, and other economy, as natural to him surely as to the beaver, or to the ant, or bee? Where, therefore, should he break off from this society, if once begun? For that it began thus, as early as generation, and grew into a household and economy, is plain. Must not this have grown soon into a Tribe? And this Tribe into a Nation? Or, though it remained a Tribe only, was not this still a society for mutual defence and common interest? In short, if Generation be natural, if natural affection and the care and nurture of the offspring be natural, things standing as they do with man, and the creature being of that form and constitution he now is, it follows: That Society must be also natural to him, and that out of society and community he never did, nor ever can subsist.”<sup>3</sup>

The following passage is peculiarly interesting, as showing that Shaftesbury had already formed the idea, familiar probably to many of my readers, that the philanthropic sentiments which we now find in the higher races of mankind were originally developed from the family affections:—

“If Eating and Drinking be natural, Herding is so too. If any Appetite or Sense be natural, the Sense of Fellowship is the same. If there be anything of nature in that affection which is between the sexes, the affection is certainly as natural towards the consequent offspring; and so again between the offspring themselves, as kindred and companions bred under the same discipline and economy. And thus a Clan or Tribe is gradually formed; a Public is recognized: and besides the

<sup>3</sup> The Moralists, Part II., Sect. 4.

pleasure found in social entertainment, language, and discourse, there is so apparent a necessity for continuing this good correspondency and union, that to have no sense or feeling of this kind, no love of country, community, or anything in common, would be the same as to be insensible even of the plainest means of self-preservation and most necessary condition of self-enjoyment.”<sup>4</sup>

III. In giving a complete account of any system of Moral Philosophy, one of the questions to be answered is, What is the analysis which it offers of the process preceding action? The step which immediately precedes action is obviously an act of Will; but the question remains, How is the Will itself determined, or what is the mental process preceding the final act of volition. Waiving the question, to which I shall presently recur, whether the Will has any self-determining power, all moralists would agree that the reason and the feelings have at least some share on its decisions. What, then, are their respective provinces in determining volition, and, consequently, action? From Aristotle and Plato downwards, the common theory of moralists has been that the first impulse to action comes from feeling, though the man whose moral organization is under due control never acts on mere feeling, but invariably submits it to reflection; that is to say, he considers what will be the consequences of gratifying his feeling, and, if he be a wise or virtuous man, he gratifies the feeling or not, according as the consequences on the whole appear to be beneficial or otherwise. Where there are many conflicting or co-operating feelings, the process is, of course, much more complex. There one feeling intensifies, modifies, or counteracts another, and the result, or, at least, the result so far as it is independent of any capricious act of Will, is

<sup>4</sup> Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour, Part III., Sect. 2.

determined by the number and relative strength of the feelings in operation, which feelings have, however, throughout the process, been constantly revised, modified, directed, and co-ordinated by the reflective action of Reason. The office, therefore, of Reason, according to this theory, is subsidiary to that of the feelings. The end is invariably suggested by desire, while reason devises the means for its accomplishment. But most ends are merely means for the accomplishment of other ends, and all ends but one may be regarded as merely means to the accomplishment of that end, namely, the ultimate aim and object of the individual, whether it be his own pleasure, the full development of his own nature, the general happiness, or whatever it may be. Now, in their capacity of means, all ends, except the ultimate end, admit of comparison both amongst themselves and with reference to the ultimate end; hence there is hardly any end which does not at times come into conflict with other ends, and thus invite the intervention of the reflective and judicial functions of the Reason. The result, in most cases, is a constant alternation of reason and desire, often rendering it difficult to disentangle the elements, and say what part of the process is rational and what emotional. The one clear principle, however, to bear in mind, though it is often lost sight of by moralists otherwise acute and profound, is that the end, however much it may afterwards be made the subject of comparison and reflection, is always, in the first instance, suggested by some passion, appetite, desire, or affection, some cause, in fact, having its source in the emotional part of our nature. The operation of the Reason is a subsequent one, and consists in devising means for the accomplishment of the end, or in tracing the consequences of attaining that end upon any other ends we may have in view, or, as this last function might otherwise be described, in comparing the



values of various subsidiary ends by reference to some higher end. The horse and the rider, the breeze which fans the sail and the rudder by which the course of the boat is directed, have been favourite metaphors to express this relation of the passions to the reason. When we come to ask what was Shaftesbury's opinion on this question, we are baffled by the paucity of passages having any direct bearing on it and by the fact that he hardly seems to have recognized its importance. The passage, however, already quoted on p. 71, implies that Appetite and Reason both concur in the determination of action, and that, though Appetite, the "elder brother," the "lad of stronger growth," takes the initiative, the process which results in action is, or ought to be, all along controlled by the skill and courage of Reason, the younger, though the sprightlier, lad of the two.

IV. But if there are few passages in Shaftesbury's works bearing on the question just discussed, there is no difficulty in finding any number of utterances on the allied question, What is the analysis of the act of approbation or disapprobation which follows on action, or How do we know one action to be right and another wrong. The prominence of the conception of a "Moral Sense" in Shaftesbury's system has already been noticed. The sentiment by which we approve or disapprove of a moral action is constantly compared with "taste" in art. Just as a *connoisseur*, immediately on perceiving a picture or a statue, pronounces on its merits, so a man with a cultivated "Moral Sense" no sooner contemplates an action, a quality, or a character, than he is able at once to distinguish it as lovely or unlovely, moral or immoral, right or wrong. Though, however, the Moral Sense admits of being strengthened and refined by cultivation, just as it may to a great extent, if not altogether, be lost "through custom or by licentiousness of practice," it has its roots in

the very constitution of the human mind. It is a "natural sense of Right and Wrong." To quote a passage already cited, it is "an original affection of earliest rise in the soul or affectionate part." At the same time, this sense, though its emotional character is always uppermost in Shaftesbury's mind, seems to include a certain amount of judgment or reflection, that is to say, a rational element. Witness the following passage:—

"If a Creature be generous, kind, constant, compassionate; yet if he cannot reflect on what he himself does, or sees others do, so as to take notice of what is worthy or honest, and make that notice or conception of Worth and Honesty to be an object of his affection, he has not the character of being virtuous: for thus, and no otherwise, he is capable of having a Sense of Right or Wrong, a Sentiment or Judgment of what is done, through just, equal, and good Affection, or the contrary."<sup>5</sup>

Shaftesbury's doctrine, on this head, may, perhaps, briefly be summed up as follows. Each man has from the first a natural Sense of Right and Wrong, a "Moral Sense" or "Conscience" (all which expressions he employs as synonymous). This sense is, in its natural condition, wholly or mainly emotional, but, as it admits of constant education and improvement, the rational or reflective element in it gradually becomes more prominent. Its decisions are generally described as if they were immediate, and, beyond the occasional recognition of a rational as well as an emotional element; little or no attempt is made to analyze it. In all these respects, Shaftesbury's "Moral Sense" differs little from the "Conscience" subsequently described by Butler, the main distinctions being that with Butler the rational or reflective

<sup>5</sup> Inquiry, Book I., Pt. 2, § 3.

element assumes greater prominence than with Shaftesbury, while, on the other hand, the "Conscience" of the one writer is invested with a more absolute and uniform<sup>6</sup> character than is the "Moral Sense" of the other. I shall presently proceed to criticize this part of Shaftesbury's doctrine, but it will be convenient to consider it in connexion with other peculiarities of his system.

V. As to the *sanctions* of morality, that is to say, the considerations or influences which impel men to right-doing or deter them from wrong-doing, Shaftesbury's answer is perfectly clear. The principal sanction with him is the approbation or disapprobation of the Moral Sense. As nothing can be more delightful than the witness of a good conscience, so nothing can be more painful than the remorse which follows on a bad action. "To a rational creature it must be horridly offensive and grievous, to have the reflection in his mind of any unjust action or behaviour which he knows to be naturally odious and ill-deserving."<sup>7</sup> With this sanction is combined, in the case of those who have any true sense of religion, the love and reverence of a beneficent, just, and wise God, whose example serves "to raise and increase the affection towards Virtue, and to submit and subdue all other affections to that alone." "Nor is this Good effected by Example merely. For where the theistical belief is entire and perfect, there must be a steady opinion of the Superintendency of a Supreme Being, a witness and spectator of human life, and conscious of whatsoever is felt or acted in the universe; so that in the perfectest recess, or deepest solitude, there must be One still presumed remaining with us, whose presence.

<sup>6</sup> I do not use the word "authoritative," because I do not admit that the moral sense of Shaftesbury is, in normal cases, less authoritative than the Conscience of Butler. See Ch. 5, pp. 144-47.

<sup>7</sup> Inquiry, Book II., Pt. 2, § 1.

singly must be of more moment than that of the most august assembly on earth. In such a presence, 'tis evident that, as the shame of guilty actions must be the greatest of any, so must the honour be of well-doing, even under the unjust censure of a world. And, in this case, 'tis very apparent how conducing a perfect Theism must be to virtue, and how great deficiency there is in Atheism." "And thus," as he says presently, "the perfection and height of Virtue must be owing to the Belief of a God."<sup>8</sup>

These two, the Moral Sense and the love and reverence of God, and these two alone, are, with Shaftesbury, the proper sanctions of right conduct. The sanction on which Locke had almost exclusively rested morality, namely, the fear of future punishment and the hope of future reward, is treated as being exactly on the same level as the sanctions of law and of public opinion. All these sanctions may be efficacious in restraining the wrong-doer by appealing to his private interests, and, consequently, they ought not to be neglected by the legislator and the moralist;<sup>9</sup> but, inasmuch as they

<sup>8</sup> Inquiry, Book I., Pt. 3, § 3.

<sup>9</sup> "It is certain that the principle of Fear of Future Punishment and Hope of Future Reward, how mercenary or servile soever it may be accounted, is yet, in many circumstances, a great advantage, security, and support to Virtue." Inquiry, Book I., Pt. 3, § 3.

"To this it is that, in our friend's opinion, we ought all of us to aspire, so as to endeavour that the excellence of the object, not the reward or punishment, should be our motive; but that, where, through the corruption of our nature, the former of these motives is found insufficient to excite to virtue, there the latter should be brought in aid, and on no account be undervalued or neglected." Moralists, Part II., Sect. 3. He presently proceeds to show, in the same section, how the argument against a providential order from the apparent disadvantages, under which Virtue often suffers in this life, may be at once answered on the hypothesis of a future existence. "Though the appearances hold ever so strongly against Virtue, and in favour of Vice, the objection which arises hence

make no appeal to man's moral nature, right conduct, secured by such means, cannot strictly be called good or virtuous. "Neither the fear of future punishment nor the hope of future reward can possibly be of the kind called good affections, such as are acknowledged the springs and sources of all actions truly good. Nor can this fear or hope consist in reality with Virtue or Goodness, if it either stands as essential to any moral performance, or as a considerable motive to any act of which some better affection ought *alone* to have been a sufficient cause;"<sup>1</sup> Shaftesbury's teaching on this subject is so different from that of most of the divines and moralists of his time, and, moreover, contains so large an element of truth, that I shall add one or two further illustrations of it:—

"If there be a belief or conception of a Deity, who is considered only as powerful over his creature, and enforcing obedience to his absolute will by particular rewards and punishments; and if on this account, through hope merely of reward or fear of punishment, the creature be incited to do the good he hates, or restrained from doing the ill to which he is not otherwise in the least degree averse: there is in this case no Virtue or Goodness whatsoever. The creature, notwithstanding his good conduct, is intrinsically of as little worth as if he acted in his natural way, when under no dread or terror of any sort. There is no more of Rectitude, Piety, or Sanctity in a creature thus reformed, than there is Meekness or Gentleness in a tiger strongly chained, or Innocence and Sobriety in a monkey under the discipline of the whip."

against a Deity may be easily removed, and all set right again on the supposal of a future state. . . . For he needs not be over-and-above solicitous as to the fate of Virtue in this world, who is secure of Hereafter."

<sup>1</sup> Inquiry, Book I., Pt. 3, § 3.

Nay, these slavish fears and selfish hopes are actually destructive of true piety and genuine goodness. "If it be true piety to love God for his own sake, the over-solicitous regard to private good, expected from him, must of necessity prove a diminution of Piety. For whilst God is beloved only as the cause of private good, he is no otherwise beloved than as any other instrument or means of pleasure by any vicious creature. Now the more there is of this violent affection towards private good, the less room is there for the other sort towards Goodness itself, or any good and deserving object, worthy of love and admiration for its own sake; such as God is universally acknowledged, or at least by the generality of civilized or refined worshippers."<sup>2</sup>

In this protest, admirable and much-needed, as, for the most part, it was, against the sordid motives almost exclusively insisted on in the current theology of Shaftesbury's time, one point is sometimes left out of view. "The law," says St. Paul, "was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ." And similarly, the hope of reward and the fear of punishment, though, in some cases, the only motives which are at first really efficacious, often, in course of time, so inure men to right-doing, that they come to love Virtue and God, the Exemplar and Rewarder of Virtue, for their own sakes. In the highest class of minds, these purer and nobler motives may be dominant from the first, and in the lowest class of

<sup>2</sup> Yet there is one sense in which the hope of future reward is itself an evidence of the love of virtue for its own sake. "In the case of religion, however, it must be considered that, if by the hope of reward be understood the love and desire of virtuous enjoyment, or of the very practice and exercise of virtue in another life, the expectation or hope of this kind is so far from being derogatory to virtue, that it is an evidence of our loving it the more sincerely and for its own sake. Nor can this principle be justly called selfish; for, if the love of virtue be not mere self-interest, the love and desire of life for virtue's sake cannot be esteemed so."

minds they may, throughout life, remain almost dormant, but there is a large intermediate class of men whose moral nature admits of gradual exaltation, and in whom the discipline which was necessary to them in childhood gradually gives place to the free and loving submission of manhood. Virtue is at first a hard rule and God a stern master, but, as reason develops and the habit of obedience becomes fixed, the truth is revealed in all its beauty and simplicity, and love becomes the fulfilling of the law. Then, hope and fear make way for love and reverence, the unselfish sense of duty and the spontaneous imitation of God. One set of motives thus gradually prepares the mind for another, and, when it has done its work, itself disappears. "After that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster."

These considerations, however, though not sufficiently insisted on, are by no means ignored by Shaftesbury. By means of the discipline of rewards and punishments he acknowledges that one affection "may come to be industriously nourished, and the contrary passion depressed. And thus Temperance, Modesty, Candour, Benignity, and other good affections, however despised at first, may come at last to be valued for their own sakes, the contrary species rejected, and the good and proper object beloved and prosecuted, when the reward or punishment is not so much as thought of."<sup>3</sup>

VI. There is another question, affecting the very existence of Morals as an independent Science, on which Shaftesbury diverged, and rightly diverged, from his master. Locke had maintained<sup>4</sup> that "the true ground of morality can only be the Will and Law of a God, who sees men in the dark, has in his hand rewards and punishments, and power enough to call to account the proudest offender." Similarly, he says

<sup>3</sup> Inquiry, Book I., Pt. 3, § 3.

*Essay*, Book I., Ch. 3, § 6.

that "the Rule prescribed by God is the true and only measure of Virtue," though this rule is afterwards determined to be conformity with what tends to the Public Happiness. Shaftesbury, however, saw that to make moral distinctions depend solely on the arbitrary will of any being, even though it were the Supreme Being himself, was in reality to abolish them altogether, or, in other words, to make them unmeaning. As is so clearly pointed out by Cudworth, whose *Treatise concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality*, though written some time before the *Characteristics*, was not published till twenty years afterwards, the moral attributes of the Deity, on this theory, entirely disappear. If what is right and wrong, good and evil, depends solely on the Will of God, how can we speak of God Himself as good? Goodness, as one of the Divine attributes, must, on this hypothesis, simply mean the conformity of God to His own Will. "Whoever thinks there is a God," says Shaftesbury, "and pretends formally to believe that he is just and good, must believe that there is independently such a thing as Justice and Injustice, Truth and Falsehood, Right and Wrong, according to which he pronounces that God is just, righteous, and true. If the mere Will, Decree, or Law of God be said absolutely to constitute Right or Wrong, then are these latter words of no significancy at all. For thus if each part of a contradiction were affirmed for truth by the supreme power, they would consequently become true. . . . . But to say of anything that it is just or unjust, on such a foundation as this, is to say nothing, or to speak without a meaning."<sup>5</sup> "How," he says in another place,<sup>6</sup> "can Supreme Goodness be intelligible to those who know not what Goodness itself is? Or how can Virtue be understood to deserve reward,

<sup>5</sup> Inquiry, Book I., Pt. 3, § 2.

<sup>6</sup> Moralists, Pt. II., Sect. 3.



when as yet its merit and excellence is unknown. We begin surely at the wrong end, when we would prove merit by favour, and Order by a Deity."

VII. One of the most important questions which can be asked with regard to any system of Ethics is, How does it solve the problem of Freedom and Necessity? Is the Will free to act as it chooses, or is it determined by motives? Are our actions the mere resultants of our previous character together with the particular motives now operating, or is there any room for independence of volition, a Will free to make the weaker become the stronger motive, a cause itself uncaused? This problem which in all ages has exercised so much of human ingenuity, and which many philosophers regard as yet unsolved, if not incapable of solution, Shaftesbury studiously avoids. There is no passage in his works, so far as I can recollect, having any direct bearing upon the question. And this reticence is entirely in accordance with the practical bent of his mind and the conception which he had formed to himself of the objects of philosophy. The question of Liberty and Necessity is speculative rather than practical,—I might almost say, metaphysical rather than ethical, and, as such, it offers no interest to a writer whose aim is to purify human nature by developing a more refined moral sense, and to ameliorate the conditions of human life by enforcing the maxims of a more extended benevolence.

To the principal questions of Ethics, then, Shaftesbury's answers are, in brief, that our moral ideas, the distinctions of virtue and vice, right and wrong, are to be found in the very make and constitution of our nature; that morality is independent of theology, actions being denominated good or just, not by the arbitrary will of God, but in virtue of some quality existing in themselves; that the ultimate test of a right

action is its tendency to promote the general welfare ; that we have a peculiar organ, the moral sense, analogous to taste in art, by which we discriminate between characters and actions as good or bad ; that the higher natures among mankind are impelled to right action, and deterred from wrong action, partly by the Moral Sense, partly by the love and reverence of a just and good God, while the lower natures are mainly influenced by the opinions of others, or by the hope of reward and the fear of punishment ; that appetite and reason both concur in the determination of action ; lastly, that the question whether the Will does or does not possess any freedom of choice, irrespectively of character and motives, is one which it does not concern the moralist to solve.

In this brief résumé of the leading questions of ethics, the reader will at once be struck with the difficulty of reconciling the answers to two of the questions proposed, namely, the nature of the criterion and the nature of the approving act. If the test or criterion of a right action or a virtuous quality be its tendency to promote the general welfare, surely, it may be objected, a long process of ratiocination is often required, in order to trace consequences and compare various classes of results. This objection contains a certain amount, but a certain amount only, of truth. In the first place, the great majority of men seldom perform this process of tracing an action into its remote consequences. They have been taught or have come insensibly to regard certain actions with admiration and others with abhorrence, and, as soon as they witness an action either of the one kind or the other, the appropriate feeling is excited. Even here, though the emotional act, the exercise of the "Moral Sense," is the more prominent, there is an exercise of the Reason as well. Before the sentiment of approbation or disapprobation is excited, the act must have been referred, however rapidly or unconsciously, to a class, or connected, by

association, with other acts of a similar kind. Thus, if I detect a man in deceiving me, the sentiment of disapprobation seems to be at once excited, but between the steps of the discovery and the feeling there really intervenes a reference of the particular act to the class of false dealing, or an association of it with other acts of the same kind which have excited my abhorrence before. In either case, the process involves comparison or reflection, that is to say, it is a rational one. Sometimes, even among unreflective men, who, of course, form the great majority of mankind, the rational element is far more prominent than in the cases I have hitherto described. Any man, who is at all capable of exercising his reason, must at times consider what are likely to be the particular consequences of his own actions or those of others, or what would be the consequences to society at large if such actions were of frequent occurrence, and, in such a case, the reasoning process is always a conscious, and often a lengthy one. While this process is going on, the character of the act is as yet undecided, and, consequently, the sentiment, which will ultimately be evoked, is in abeyance. But if this be so amongst unreflective men, it is of far more frequent occurrence amongst the small class of reflective men. No circumstance is more characteristic of an educated and thoughtful man than that he is ready, from time to time, to review his moral judgments, and that his sentiments of approbation or disapprobation, except in very clear cases, are only expressed after mature deliberation. He sees, or tries to see, all the sides of a question, and attempts to balance all the various considerations connected with it, and hence his judgments are, as a rule, far more sober and far more likely to be true to facts than those of ordinary men. In all cases, then, there is a rational process which precedes the emotion of moral approbation or disapprobation, though, in most cases, this process is

almost instantaneous, and, perhaps, almost unconscious; while, in some cases, as we have seen, and especially amongst educated men, the process is often a long and complicated one. Now the expressions which Shaftesbury employs, such as Moral Sense, Sense of Right and Wrong, a Right Taste, &c., as well as his whole treatment of the subject of moral approbation, undoubtedly tend to obscure the share of reason, while they tend to exaggerate the share of emotion, in our moral judgments. He does not, indeed, altogether ignore the rational element, but he passes it by with the merest recognition. Nor is this fault one of simply theoretical import, a mere defect in analysis. Systems like those of Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, and Butler, often exercise an unfortunate influence on men, in the way of inducing or confirming the habit of forming hasty judgments and acting on insufficient reflection. When we are told that morality is a matter of taste, or that we have only to exercise a "Sense," or consult our Conscience, in order to know what is right, we are very apt to act or to judge on our first impulse, without any balancing of considerations or any allowance for circumstances. In nine cases out of ten, or possibly in ninety-nine out of a hundred, this course may be the right one, but in the tenth or the hundredth it may lead to most disastrous consequences, or to most inequitable judgments. The generality of men have much more need to be told not to act or judge without due consideration, than to be told to act up to their convictions or to judge according to their preconceived opinions. It is perfectly true that we ought to act up to our convictions, or "follow conscience," as the phrase is, and that we ought to judge in accordance with general rules, but it is equally true that we ought to be constantly engaged in reviewing, comparing, and modifying our rules, and in educating and improving our consciences. "Let any plain, honest man,"

says Butler,<sup>7</sup> "before he engages in any course of action, ask himself, Is this I am going about right, or is it wrong? Is it good, or is it evil? I do not in the least doubt but that this question would be answered agreeably to truth and virtue, by almost any fair man in almost any circumstance." No doubt any "plain, honest man" would give an answer in accordance with the average moral sentiment, or perhaps slightly in advance of the average moral sentiment, of the time and country in which he lived. But did it never occur to the writer that there are "plain, honest men" in other countries besides England, and in stages of civilization very different from ours, and that there were "plain, honest men" one, two, and three thousand years ago, in the East as well as the West, and amongst pagans as well as amongst Jews and Christians? These "plain, honest men," could they be brought together, would give very different answers on many of the leading or more perplexed questions of conduct both from one another, and from the "plain, honest men" who lived in England in the early part of the eighteenth century. This divergence of the moral sentiment is alone sufficient to show that the decisions of the "moral sense" or "conscience," cannot be treated as absolute. A number of "consciences" whose decisions differ cannot all be in the right. That a man should act according to his conscience, that is to say, that he should not act contrary to his convictions, is a moral truism; but it is no less his duty to take every precaution in his power that his conscience may guide him to a true decision. And this object he can only secure, first, by constantly reviewing and correcting his moral judgments in accordance with the best lights he can find, so as to adjust, as far as possible, his sense of right and wrong to the real qualities of

actions, and, secondly, by taking pains, in any particular case of difficulty, to ascertain and weigh all the circumstances and considerations bearing on the point, before allowing his ethical emotions to be enlisted on either side.

Shaftesbury's analysis of the act of moral approbation is, we have seen, defective, because it does not discriminate with sufficient precision between the rational and emotional elements in our moral judgments; and it is misleading, because it assigns a disproportionate share to the emotional element at the expense of the rational element. It might also be objected to his account of the Moral Sense that, though it admits that this sense is capable of cultivation and improvement, it does not state in what the process of education consists, nor make any attempt to trace the stages through which the original germ passes into the matured product. But investigations of this kind, to possess any value, require a knowledge of the subtler workings of association which was beyond Shaftesbury's powers of psychological analysis. Locke had already enunciated the doctrines and some of the laws of association, but it was not till after the publication of the writings of Hartley and James Mill that it was recognized as the potent instrument which we now know it to be.

The idea that our moral judgments are formed by a "sense," "taste," or "relish," naturally suggests an analogy between Art and Morality, Beauty and Virtue. This analogy, which is constantly insisted on by Shaftesbury, seems to me to be too refined to be of much service in ethical inquiry. Take a beautiful picture. In what does its beauty consist? In the proportions of the forms and in a certain subtle harmony of colouring. Take a moral act. What is it that constitutes it moral? Its tendency, at least according to Shaftesbury's system, to promote the general welfare or the good of mankind. Now where, at first sight, is the resemblance between

the beautiful picture and the moral act? It is true that with a little ingenuity we may find such a resemblance, which consists, I presume, in the act being *proportional* to the needs and constitution of human society, as any particular form in the picture is *proportional* to the rest of the picture. But, however ingenious this point of view may be, do we really throw any light on the character of human action, or the distinction between vice and virtue, by having recourse to what I must venture to call this far-fetched analogy? And so, again, with regard to a virtuous disposition. A disposition or character can only be known by its acts, and these acts must necessarily be isolated. But a picture, or statue, or a landscape may be seen at a glance. It is true that we may reflect on the nature of a character as manifested by its acts, and contemplating it, with a certain amount of mental effort, as a whole, speak with some justice of its being *harmonious* or *well-balanced*. But, though the analogy is certainly less remote here than in the case of virtuous acts, it may be questioned whether we really gain anything by this mode of speaking. The conception of "goodness" is surely more appropriate, whether we are contemplating acts or characters, than that of "beauty," and, therefore, why introduce a metaphor when a direct expression would serve our purpose better? And yet there are occasions when, in order to express our admiration of characters or actions, we seem to be led naturally to select such words as "grand," "beautiful," or "graceful." In all these cases I think it will be found that the characters or actions rise far above, or, at least, diverge considerably from the average standard of excellence, and that, consequently, the ordinary ethical expressions being inadequate to convey our meaning, we are compelled to have recourse to metaphor. But this is a well-known device of language which is by no means peculiar to morals.

Another distinctive feature of Shaftesbury's system remains to be noticed. I have already pointed out that, in the economy of human nature, he lays an undue stress on the benevolent affections. It would, indeed, be no unfair description of his ethical theory to say that, according to him, the *goodness* of man consists in the possession and exercise of these affections, and *virtue* in what may be called conscious and approved benevolence.<sup>8</sup> Hence his system and that of Hutcheson have often been distinguished as the Benevolent Theory of Ethics. It must not be supposed that either the one author or the other denied the necessity of a due regard to one's own interests; for, if every man were absolutely careless about his own welfare, human affairs would, obviously, soon come to a standstill, not to say that, whatever care others might endeavour to take of him, the individual, if he took no care whatever of himself, must speedily perish. But Shaftesbury, as we have already seen,<sup>9</sup> looked on what are usually called the self-regarding virtues rather as conditions of virtue than as themselves virtues; and Hutcheson, as we shall see presently,<sup>1</sup> going still further than Shaftesbury, maintained that actions which flow solely from self-love "seem perfectly indifferent in a moral sense, and neither raise the love or hatred of the observer." Yet, if a man, in spite of difficulties and temptations, is cleanly, temperate, chaste, and frugal, and shows a due sense of his own independence and dignity, does he excite no admiration in us? And, on the other hand, if he is brutal, grovelling, and incapable of exercising any self-

<sup>8</sup> See, for instance, *Inquiry*, Book I., Pt. 2, § 3, Pt. 3, § 1. A man is *good*, if his affections be adapted to promote the welfare of the species; but he can only be called *virtuous*, if, on reflection, he approves such affections and the acts which flow from them, and disapproves the contrary.

<sup>9</sup> See p. 67.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 194.



control, does he not move our disgust and hatred? Take the quality of Temperance alone. Whatever be our theory of virtue, whether we regard it as a habit conducive to the public good, or as a self-realization of the individual, or as obedience to law, whether civil, divine, or natural; in any case, does it not seem preposterous to say that Temperance is not a virtue, or Intemperance a vice? It is perfectly true that if a man had the self-regarding virtues, but were deficient in the benevolent virtues, and especially in the supreme virtue of justice, we should not, on the whole, call him a good or virtuous man. But neither, as I have already said,<sup>2</sup> could we properly call a man good or virtuous, taking his character as a whole, if he were distinctly lacking in the personal virtues, however kindly, liberal, and just he might be to others. The latter case is, indeed, far less common than the former. For it is proverbial that, if a man does not care for himself, he is not likely to care much for other people; whereas those who stop short at a regard for themselves are, unfortunately, only too numerous. And it may have been this comparative rarity of the extra-regarding or benevolent virtues (of which group I regard justice as not only a member, but as the principal member) which led Shaftesbury and Hutcheson to assign to them so disproportionate a value. These virtues are, indeed, essential alike to the well-being of human society and to the moral perfection of the individual, and they are the crown and flower of all virtues, but still it is a mistake to ignore the fact that there is another group of virtues, equally essential, though it may be less rare, and less lovely.

To those who are acquainted with the ancient writers on Ethics it will be plain that Shaftesbury is indebted to them

<sup>2</sup> See p. 76.

for many of his most characteristic ideas. Thus, the analogy between Art and Morals, Beauty and Virtue, which is of such frequent occurrence in his writings, is evidently derived from Plato. The idea that man is naturally a social animal, and that society has its origin in the family union, will remind every classical reader of Aristotle's Politics and the Third Book of Plato's Laws. Again, the idea of a due balance among the passions and affections, or that the various parts of man's nature should be so harmonized that no one should be developed in excess of the others, is derived from the Republic of Plato and the Ethics of Aristotle. To take one more instance, such a passage as the following, which embodies an idea of frequent recurrence throughout the *Characteristics*, could hardly have been written by any one who was not thoroughly imbued with the spirit of the stoical philosophy:—

“Can you not call to mind what we resolved concerning *Nature*? Can anything be more desirable than to *follow* her? Or is it not by this freedom from our passions and low interests, that we are reconciled to the goodly *Order* of the Universe; that we harmonize with *Nature*; and live in friendship both with God and Man?”<sup>3</sup>

It would have been strange indeed, had the tastes of an author so devoted to the study of classical literature as Shaftesbury not been reflected in his ethical writings. But, perhaps, it would not be too much to say that there is no modern writer whose views on morals approximate so

<sup>3</sup> Moralists, Part III., Sect. 3. Other instances of Stoical doctrines adopted by Shaftesbury are that “Providence has placed our happiness and good in things we can bestow upon ourselves,” that “Happiness is from within, not from without,” and that “Opinion,” that is the supposition we form about things, “is all in all.”

closely to the classical way of thinking on these subjects as do his.

Of previous English writers, those to whom he most frequently refers or alludes are Hobbes and Locke. To the distinctive tenets in moral and political philosophy of Hobbes, namely, that a "state of mere nature" is a state of "war of every man against every man," that civil society is based on a contract, and that there is in mankind no such thing as disinterested affection, not originating in self-love, we have already seen that Shaftesbury declares himself in direct and emphatic opposition.<sup>4</sup> There can, in fact, be little doubt

<sup>4</sup> The following passage affords so acute a criticism of Hobbes' main theory, that I think it well to append it, both on account of its intrinsic value and also as furnishing a good example of Shaftesbury's argumentative power:—

"'Tis ridiculous to say, there is any obligation on man to act sociably, or honestly, in a formed Government, and not in that which is commonly called *the State of Nature*. For to speak in the fashionable language of our modern philosophy: 'Society being founded on a compact, the surrender made of every man's private unlimited right into the hands of the majority, or such as the majority should appoint, was of free choice and by a promise.' Now the Promise itself was made in the State of Nature. And that which could make a Promise obligatory in the State of Nature must make all other acts of humanity as much our real duty and natural part. Thus Faith, Justice, Honesty, and Virtue must have been as early as the State of Nature, or they could never have been at all. The Civil Union or Confederacy could never make Right or Wrong, if they subsisted not before. ✓ He who was free to any villainy before his contract will and ought to make as free with his contract, when he thinks fit. The Natural Knave has the same reason to be a Civil one, and may dispense with his politic capacity as oft as he sees occasion. 'Tis only his word stands in his way.—A man is obliged to keep his word. Why? Because he has given his word to keep it.—Is not this a notable account of the original of moral justice, and the rise of civil government and allegiance!" *Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour*, Part III., Sect. 1.

that, like most of the other ethical writers of this time, he was mainly impelled to his task through the shock which had been given to the current moral sentiment by the paradoxes of Hobbes, and through the desire to arrest the progress of doctrines at which society was then seriously alarmed. Shaftesbury appears to have conceived it as his special mission to undertake this work, not as a "pedant" or a "schoolman," but as a "man of taste."

It was probably in accordance with this conception that he refrained from using the language about the "laws of nature," which had hitherto been current in ethical treatises, and that he preferred to represent morality as a matter of "taste," "sentiment," or "affection," rather than as dictated simply by reason. These differences alone are sufficient to distinguish him from writers like Cumberland, Cudworth, and Clarke, though, in making benevolent acts and dispositions the special objects of moral approbation, he is, to a great extent, anticipated by Cumberland, whose influence on subsequent moralists has, perhaps, hardly been sufficiently recognized.

Of Shaftesbury's own influence on other writers and of his relation to subsequent schools of ethics, I shall speak presently in a separate chapter.

Before concluding this chapter, however, I must say a few words on the marked hostility with which Shaftesbury, in his character of a moralist, attacks the doctrines of Locke. I have already, in the last chapter, drawn attention to the vehement passage directed against Locke's philosophy in one of the letters to Michael Ainsworth.<sup>5</sup> There he speaks of Locke's ethical theory as "throwing all order and virtue out of the world, and making the very ideas of them unnatural." These words, of course, are aimed at Locke's denial of the

<sup>5</sup> See p. 45.

innate, or, as Shaftesbury would amend the word, *con-natural* origin of our moral ideas. In the Inquiry concerning Virtue, though Locke is not expressly named, there is an equally vehement protest against what may be called the cardinal doctrines of his ethical system, namely, that moral distinctions depend solely on the arbitrary will of God, and that they are mainly enforced by the supernatural sanctions of hope of future reward and fear of future punishment. Indeed, no two systems could well be more opposed on many points than are those of Shaftesbury and his tutor. According to Locke, "the true and only measure of virtue" is the Will of God, as revealed either in the Scriptures or by the Light of Nature. The only means of ascertaining that Will is the use of the reason, deducing rules of action either from the expressed commands of God in the Old and New Testaments, or, which he seems to contemplate as the commoner case, from considerations of public welfare, "God having, by an inseparable connexion, joined virtue and public happiness together." The main sanctions of this "will and law of a God, who sees men in the dark," are the rewards and punishments which He holds in His hand. "By the fault is the rod, and with the transgression a fire ready to punish it." Shaftesbury, on the other hand, maintained that, independently of any commands or prohibitions, whether of God or man, actions are intrinsically right or wrong, just or unjust; though, at the same time, he agreed with Locke in adopting as the test or criterion of a right action its tendency to promote the public interests or the general good of mankind. The character of an action, however, was to be ascertained, not so much by reasoning, as by a subtle and delicate sense, capable, indeed, of improvement by discipline, culture, and education, but the natural and inalienable heritage of every man from his birth. Lastly, the incentives to well-doing and the deterrents from evil-doing

are to be sought not solely, or even mainly, in the opinion of mankind, or in the rewards and punishments of the magistrate, or in the hopes and terrors of a future world, but in the answer of a good conscience, approving virtue and disapproving vice, and in the love of a God, who, by His infinite wisdom and His all-embracing beneficence, is worthy of the love and admiration of His creatures.

## CHAPTER IV.

## SHAFTESBURY'S THEORIES ON RELIGION, BEAUTY, AND ART.

THE articles of Shaftesbury's religious creed were few and simple, but these he entertained with a conviction amounting to enthusiasm. They may briefly be summed up as a belief in one God, whose most characteristic attribute is universal benevolence, in the moral government of the Universe, and in a future state of man, making up for the imperfections and repairing the inequalities of this present life.

The existence of God is proved by the order and marks of design which appear in the Universe. "If there be divine excellence in things; if there be in Nature a supreme mind or Deity: we have then an object consummate, and comprehensive of all which is good or excellent. And this object, of all others, must of necessity be the most amiable, the most engaging, and of highest satisfaction and enjoyment. Now that there is such a principal object as this in the World, the World alone (if I may say so) by its wise and perfect order must evince."

Familiar as this argument has now become, Shaftesbury's presentation of it is sufficiently characteristic to merit a more detailed statement:—

"All things in this world are united. For, as the branch is united with the tree, so is the tree as immediately with

<sup>1</sup> Moralists, Pt. II., Sect. 3.

the earth, air, and water, which feed it. As much as the fertile mould is fitted to the tree, as much as the strong and upright trunk of the oak or elm is fitted to the twining branches of the vine or ivy : so much are the very leaves, the seeds, and fruits of these trees fitted to the various animals, these again to one another, and to the elements where they live, and to which they are, as appendices, in a manner fitted and joined, as either by wings for the air, fins for the water, feet for the earth, and by other correspondent inward parts of a more curious frame and texture. Thus, in contemplating all on earth, we must of necessity view *All in One*, as holding to one common stock. Thus too is the system of the bigger world. See there the mutual dependency of things!—the relation of one to another ; of the sun to this inhabited earth, and of the earth and other planets to the sun!—the order, union, and coherence of the Whole! And know that by this survey you will be obliged to own the Universal System and coherent scheme of things to be established on abundant proof, capable of convincing any fair and just contemplator of the works of nature. For scarce would any one, till he had well surveyed this universal scene, believe an union thus evidently demonstrable by such numerous and powerful instances of mutual correspondency and relation, from the minutest ranks and orders of beings to the remotest spheres!

\* \* \* \* \*

“ Now, having recognized this uniform consistent fabric, and owned the Universal System, we must of consequence acknowledge a Universal Mind ; which no ingenious [ingenuous] man can be tempted to disown, except through the imagination of Disorder in the Universe, its seat. For can it be supposed of any one in the world that, being in some desert far from men, and hearing there a perfect symphony of music, or seeing an exact pile of regular archi-



ture arising gradually from the earth in all its orders and proportions, he should be persuaded that, at the bottom, there was no design accompanying this, no secret spring of thought, no active mind? Would he, because he saw no hand, deny the handywork, and suppose that each of these complete and perfect systems were framed, and thus united in just symmetry and conspiring order, either by the accidental blowing of the winds or rolling of the sands?"<sup>2</sup>

But it is not necessary to go out into the "bigger world" to find God. We may recognize Him in the microcosm of ourselves, either by direct intuition or by an inference from such intuition. "In vain we labour to understand that principle of Sense and Thought, which, seeming in us to depend so much on Motion, yet differs so much from it, and from Matter itself, as not to suffer us to conceive how Thought can more result from this, than this arise from Thought. But Thought we own pre-eminent, and confess the reallest of Beings; the only existence of which we are made sure by being conscious. All else may be only dream and shadow. All which even Sense suggests may be deceitful. The Sense itself remains still; Reason subsists; and Thought maintains its eldership of being. Thus are we in a manner conscious of the original and eternally existent Thought, whence we derive our own. And thus the assurance we have of the existence of beings above our Sense, and of Thee (the great exemplar of Thy works), comes from Thee, the All-True and Perfect, who hast thus communicated Thyself more immediately to us, so as in some manner to inhabit within our souls; Thou who art Original Soul, diffusive, vital in all, inspiring the Whole." But the idea which we are thus competent to acquire by self-introspection, is amplified and

<sup>2</sup> Moralists, Pt. II., Sect. 4.

perfected by the contemplation of external nature. "All Nature's wonders serve to excite and perfect this idea of their Author. 'Tis here he suffers us to see and even to converse with Him, in a manner suitable to our frailty. How glorious is it to contemplate Him in this noblest of his works apparent to us, the system of the bigger world."<sup>3</sup>

It has sometimes been supposed that Shaftesbury identified God with Nature. This, however, I think, was not the case. Witness the following passages:—

"I only know that both theirs" (that is, the natures of trees) "and all other natures must for their duration depend alone on that Nature on which the world depends; and that every genius else must be subordinate to that One good Genius, whom I would willingly persuade you to think belonging to this world, according to our present way of speaking."<sup>4</sup>

"If it" (compounded matter) "can present us with so many innumerable instances of particular forms, who share this simple Principle by which they are really One, live, act, and have a Nature or Genius peculiar to themselves and provident for their own welfare; how shall we at the same time overlook this in the whole, and deny the Great and General One of the World? How can we be so unnatural as to disown Divine Nature, our common Parent, and refuse to recognize the universal and sovereign Genius?"<sup>5</sup>

From these and other passages we may infer that Shaftesbury conceived the relation of God to the World as that of the soul to the body. Nature is, as it were, the vesture of God, and God the soul of the Universe. The idea of an *Anima Mundi* had been familiar to many of the ancients, whether, as with Plato, they regarded it as itself a created

<sup>3</sup> Moralists, Pt. III., Sect. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Id.

<sup>5</sup> Id.

being, or, as with the Stoics, they identified it with the Supreme Creator, or rather Fashioner, of the Universe, God Himself. Almost within our own times, this idea of a Soul of the World has been revived by Schelling. To most of my readers, Shaftesbury's thought will recall the well-known lines of Pope in which it is enshrined, and which it probably suggested:—

“All are but parts of one stupendous whole,  
Whose body nature is, and God the soul.”<sup>6</sup>

If there are difficulties in the way of conceiving an Universal Mind, animating and governing nature, there are similar difficulties in the way of conceiving a Self or particular Mind, animating and governing our own bodies. “For be the difficulty ever so great, it stands the same, you may perceive, against your own Being, or against that which I am pretending to convince you of. You may raise what objections you please on either hand; and your dilemma may be of notable force against the manner of such a Supreme Being's existence. But, after you have done all, you will bring the same dilemma home to you, and be at a loss still about Your-Self. When you have argued ever so long upon these metaphysical points of Mode and Substance, and have philosophically concluded from the difficulties of each hypothesis that there cannot be in Nature such a Universal-One as this, you must conclude, from the same reasons, that there cannot be any such particular-one as Your-Self. But that there is actually such a one as this latter, your own mind, 'tis hoped, may satisfy you. And of this Mind it is enough to say, “That it is something which acts upon a body, and has something passive under it and subject to it: That it has not only body or mere matter for its subject, but in some respect even

<sup>6</sup> Pope's *Essay on Man*, Ep. 1., 267, 8

itself too and what proceeds from it: That it superintends and manages its own imaginations, appearances, fancies; correcting, working, and modelling these, as it finds good, and adorning and accomplishing, the best it can, this composite Order of Body and Understanding." Such a Mind and governing part, I know there is somewhere in the world. Let Pyrrho, by the help of such another, contradict me, if he pleases. We have our several understandings and thoughts, however we came by them. Each understands and thinks the best he can for his own purpose: He for Himself; I for another Self. And who I beseech you for the Whole? . . . . . Is not this Nature still a Self? Or, tell me, I beseech you, How are You one? By what token? or by virtue of what? "By a Principle which joins certain parts, and which thinks and acts consonantly for the use and purpose of those parts." Say, therefore, what is your whole system a part of? or is it, indeed, no part, but a whole, by itself, absolute, independent, and unrelated to anything besides? If it be indeed a part, and really related; to what else, I beseech you, than to the Whole of Nature? Is there then such a uniting principle in Nature? If so, how are you then a Self, and Nature not so? How have you something to understand and act for you, and Nature, who gave this understanding, nothing at all to understand for her, advise her, or help her out (poor Being!) on any occasion, whatever necessity she may be in? Has the World such ill-fortune in the main? Are there so many particular understanding active principles everywhere? And is there nothing, at last, which thinks, acts, or understands for All? Nothing which administers or looks after All?" <sup>7</sup>

4 The Universal Mind is not only all-powerful and all-wise, but perfectly good. "There can be no malice but where

<sup>7</sup> Moralists, Pt. III., Sect. 1.

interests are opposed. A Universal Being can have no interest opposite; and therefore can have no malice. If there be a general mind, it can have no particular interest; but the general good, or good of the whole, and its own private good must of necessity be one and the same. It can intend nothing besides, nor aim at anything beyond, nor be provoked to anything contrary. So that we have only to consider whether there be really such a thing as a Mind which has relation to the Whole or not. If there be really a mind, we may rest satisfied that it is the best-natured one in the world.”<sup>8</sup>

From the perfect wisdom and goodness and the supreme power of the Deity it follows that, if Nature be regarded as a whole, everything, regarded with reference to that whole, must be for the best. As Shaftesbury’s disciple afterwards wrote:

“All nature is but art, unknown to thee;  
All chance direction, which thou canst not see;  
All discord, harmony not understood;  
All partial evil, universal good.”<sup>9</sup>

Replying to a supposed objector, at the beginning of the *Moralists*,<sup>1</sup> Shaftesbury, in the person of Philocles, thus describes the confessions which he has wrung from him:—

“That such a hazardous affair as this of Creation should have been undertaken by those who had not perfect foresight as well as command, you owned was neither wise nor just. But you stood to Foresight. You allowed the consequences to have been understood by the creating powers, when they undertook their work; and you denied that it would have been better for them to have omitted it, though they knew what would be the event. ’Twas better still that the project should be executed, whatever might become of mankind, or how hard

<sup>8</sup> Letter concerning Enthusiasm, Sect. 5.

<sup>9</sup> Pope’s *Essay on Man*, Ep. I. 289-92.

<sup>1</sup> Pt. I., Sect. 2.

soever such a creation was like to fall on the generality of this miserable race. For 'twas impossible, you thought, that Heaven should have acted otherwise than for the best. So that even from this misery and Ill of Man, there was undoubtedly some Good arising; something which overbalanced all, and made full amends."

In a later passage,<sup>2</sup> after describing the successive steps by which the mind rises from the contemplation of beauty in particular forms to the observation of universal order and the intuition of supreme beauty, he proceeds to "vindicate the works of God to man" in a still bolder strain: "Much is alleged, in answer, to show why Nature errs, and how she came thus impotent and erring from an unerring hand. But I deny she errs; and, when she seems most ignorant or perverse in her productions, I assert her even then as wise and provident as in her goodliest works. For 'tis not then that men complain of the world's order or abhor the face of things, when they see various interests mixed and interfering; natures subordinate, of different kinds, opposed one to another, and in their different operations submitted, the higher to the lower. 'Tis, on the contrary, from this order of inferior and superior things that we admire the world's beauty, founded thus on contrarieties; whilst from such various and disagreeing principles a universal concord is established. . . . . Here then is that solution you require; and hence those seeming blemishes cast upon Nature. Nor is there ought in this beside what is natural and good. 'Tis Good which is predominant; and every corruptible and mortal nature by its mortality and corruption yields only to some better, and all in common to that best and highest Nature, which is incorruptible and immortal."

Objections to this idea of the Universe being constructed

<sup>2</sup> Pt. I., Sect. 3.

on a perfect scheme are met by Shaftesbury, as by so many other theologians and philosophers, with the appeal to our ignorance and the finite nature of our capacities,—to the principle that

“ ’Tis but a part we see, and not the whole.”

“ Now, in this mighty Union, if there be such relations of parts one to another as are not easily discovered, if on this account the end and use of things does not everywhere appear, there is no wonder: since ’tis no more indeed than what must happen of necessity. Nor could Supreme Wisdom have otherwise ordered it. For, in an infinity of things thus relative, a mind which sees not infinitely can see nothing fully. And, since each particular has relations to all in general, it can know no perfect or true relation of anything in a world not perfectly and fully known.”<sup>3</sup>

In the case of man, the sufferings and imperfections of his present state are used as an argument in favour of a future life, where all apparent inequality and injustice will be redressed:

“ But, being once convinced of Order and a Providence as to things *present*, men may soon, perhaps, be satisfied even of a *future* state. For, if Virtue be to itself no small reward, and Vice in a great measure its own punishment, we have a solid ground to go upon. The plain foundations of a distributive justice, and due order in this world, may lead us to conceive a further building. We apprehend a larger scheme, and easily resolve ourselves why things were not completed in this state, but their accomplishment reserved rather to some further period. For had the good and virtuous of mankind been wholly prosperous in this life; had goodness never met with opposition, nor merit ever lain under a cloud: where had been the trial, victory, or crown of virtue? Where had the virtues had their theatre, or whence their names? Where

<sup>3</sup> Moralists, Pt. II., Sect. 4.

had been Temperance or Self-Denial? Where Patience, Meekness, Magnanimity? Whence have these their being? What merit, except from hardship? What Virtue without a conflict, and the encounter of such enemies as arise both within and from abroad?"<sup>4</sup>

But it is not only from the prospect of future reparation that we may derive solace in our misfortunes. We may comfort ourselves also with the reflection that our particular lot, be it apparently good or evil, is a necessary incident in the well-ordering of that larger system, which we help to compose. After saying that, "according to the hypothesis of those who exclude a general mind, 'tis scarce possible, upon disastrous occasions, and under the circumstances of a calamitous and hard fortune, to prevent a natural kind of abhorrence and spleen, which will be entertained and kept alive by the imagination of so perverse an order of things," he proceeds: "But in another hypothesis (that of perfect Theism) it is understood 'That whatever the Order of the World produces is, in the main, both just and good.' Therefore, in the course of things in this world, whatever hardship of events may seem to force from any rational creature a hard censure of his private condition or lot, he may by reflection, nevertheless, come to have patience and to acquiesce in it. Nor is this all. He may go further still in this reconciliation, and from the same principle may make the lot itself an object of his good affection, whilst he strives to maintain this generous fealty, and stands so well disposed towards the laws and government of his higher country."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Moralists, Pt. II., Sect. 3.

<sup>5</sup> This passage affords another instance of the similarity of much of Shaftesbury's teaching to that of the Stoics. Von Gizycki refers to *Seneca, De Vita Beata*, Ch. xv., from which I extract the following sentences: "Quomodo hic potest deo parere et quicquid evenit bono animo excipere nec de fato queri, casuum suorum benignus interpret, et



Such is Shaftesbury's scheme of theology. Like most other optimists, he fails, at least on the face of his system,<sup>6</sup> to meet the great difficulty which is usually felt by men who are tolerably familiar with the ills of life and the destructive forces of nature, when theories of this roseate hue are propounded to them. Why, if the designer and governor of the Universe be all-powerful and all-wise as well as all-good, could he not have secured the beauty, the perfection, and the happiness of the whole, without so much deformity, imperfection, and misery in the parts? A suffering man may well be pardoned, if, even with a firm assurance of future reparation, he questions the accuracy of the dictum that "everything is for the best in the best of all possible worlds." Why, he may say, should I not be happy here as well as hereafter, why should not an omnipotent Providence attain its ends by means less painful and less hurtful to its creatures? And, though the necessity of a contrast between good and evil, pleasure and pain, like the lights and shades in painting, or the harmonies and dissonances in music, which Shaftesbury adduces as parallels, may, in some measure, meet the difficulty, it can hardly be said altogether to remove it. Some of the ancient philosophers imagined that the designs of a beneficent creator were constantly being frustrated, though with varying success, by the resistance of an inert matter, the source of all evil both in man and nature. The Manichees, following the ancient Persians, maintained the original and independent existence of two principles, one of Good or Light, the other

ad voluptatum dolorumque punctiunculas concutitur? . . . . . Quicquid ex universi constitutione patiendum est magno suscipiatur animo. Ad hoc sacramentum adacti sumus, ferre mortalia nec perturbari iis quæ vitare non est nostræ potestatis. In regno nati sumus. Deo parere libertas est."

<sup>6</sup> For a qualification of his system, which Shaftesbury possibly admitted, see pp. 115, 116.

of Evil or Darkness. Christian theology recognizes an evil principle, though a subordinate and created one, and, in the last resort, refers all evil, including sin and death, to the disobedience of voluntary agents, who, by obedience to the Supreme Will, might have preserved to themselves and their posterity their primeval condition of unsullied happiness. So perplexed was J. S. Mill by this ever-recurring problem of the existence of evil, that he thinks the attribute of perfect Goodness in the Deity can only be saved at the expense of his Omnipotence. "The only admissible moral theory of Creation," he says, "is that the Principle of Good cannot at once and altogether subdue the powers of evil, either physical or moral; could not place mankind in a world free from the necessity of an incessant struggle with the maleficent powers, or make them always victorious in that struggle, but could and did make them capable of carrying on the fight with vigour and with progressively increasing success."<sup>7</sup> Whatever may be the solution of these difficulties, and they are difficulties which will probably always continue to exercise the minds of reflecting men, the optimistic theory seems to me at least more reasonable than the now fashionable theory of pessimism. It is easier to believe, so it appears to me, that, if we could see the whole scheme of nature, we should recognize that all things are for the best, than that we are living in a world, which, if it were only a little worse than it is, would cease to exist. Both Optimism and Pessimism, when nakedly stated, seem to practical men to wear an air of paradox, but surely Pessimism is far the more paradoxical of the two.

It is ingeniously remarked by Mill that, in the *Théodicée*, Leibnitz does not maintain that this is the best of all imaginable, but only of all possible worlds. The Deity, therefore,

<sup>7</sup> *Essays on Religion*, pp. 38, 39.

is regarded as limited by possibilities, certain combinations of events only being possible, and certain events in those combinations excluding or implying the presence of others. Thus, for instance, freedom of choice in man implies liability to error and sin. He cannot be endowed with the privilege, without also being exposed to the danger. The Optimism of Leibnitz is, therefore, a limited and qualified Optimism. Shaftesbury's Optimism appears, at first sight, to be more thoroughgoing, but it may be questioned whether he did not regard the operations of God as limited by what he conceived as the co-existent and co-eternal principle of matter. At least, in the *Moralists*,<sup>8</sup> the following curious and striking passage is put into the mouth of Philocles, and Theocles, by his silence, appears to acquiesce in the views there suggested:—

“I expected to have heard from you, in customary form, of a First Cause, a First Being, and a Beginning of Motion: how clear the idea was of an immaterial substance: and how plainly it appeared that, at some time or other, Matter must have been created.<sup>9</sup> But as to all this you are silent. As for what is said of ‘a material unthinking substance being never able to have produced an immaterial thinking one,’ I readily grant it; but on the condition that this great maxim of ‘Nothing being ever made from Nothing’ may hold as well on my side as my adversary’s. And then, I suppose, that, whilst the world endures, he will be at a loss how to assign a beginning to Matter, or how to suggest a possibility of annihilating it. The spiritual men may, as long as they please, represent to us, in the most eloquent manner, “that Matter, considered in a thousand different shapes, joined and disjoined, varied and modified to eternity, can never, of itself,

<sup>8</sup> Pt. II., Sect. 4.

<sup>9</sup> Shaftesbury is here probably alluding to Locke's demonstration of the Existence of a God, contained in the *Essay*, Bk. IV., Ch. 10.

afford one single thought, never occasion or give rise to anything like sense or knowledge." Their argument will hold good against a Democritus, an Epicurus, or any of the elder or later Atomists. But it will be turned on them by an examining Academicist. And, when the two substances are fairly set asunder, and considered apart as different kinds, 'twill be as strong sense, and as good argument, to say as well of the immaterial kind: 'That do with it as you please, modify it a thousand ways, purify it, exalt it, sublime it, torture it ever so much, or rack it, as they say, with thinking; you will never be able to produce or force the contrary substance out of it.' The poor dregs of sorry matter can no more be made out of the simple pure substance of immaterial thought, than the high spirits of thought or reason can be extracted from the gross substance of heavy matter. So let the Dogmatists make of this argument what they can."

If this passage expresses Shaftesbury's own opinions, he probably, like Plato, regarded matter as the cause of evil or imperfection, the blind, unintelligent force, which even Supreme Wisdom must take into account in its designs for the good of the entire system of the Universe. Hence, the necessity for subtle combinations, in which the part must often be sacrificed to the whole, and the Universal Good can only be compassed at the expense of individual suffering, occasional deformities, and particular blemishes. On this view of Shaftesbury's theory, the world is not, to use Mill's phrase, the best imaginable world, but the best world that existing circumstances admit of; the supreme goodness and wisdom of the Deity being displayed, not in the framing of an ideal scheme, but in the adaptation of given means to the best attainable end.

No description of Shaftesbury's theological position would

be complete, unless it noticed his attitude towards Revealed Religion and the doctrines and clergy of the Established Church. As to Revelation, notwithstanding the tone of mock deference with which, in common with so many other sceptical writers of the eighteenth century, he professes his entire submission to "the Opinions by Law established," it is tolerably plain that he does not regard the Church or the Bible as having communicated to mankind any moral or spiritual truths which were not attainable by the natural exercise of the human reason. He believed steadfastly, and even enthusiastically, in all those doctrines which Divines assign to the province of Natural Religion,—in One God, in the moral government of the Universe, in a future state of rewards and punishments,—but the distinctive doctrines of Christianity were alien alike to his optimistic modes of thought and to the intensely classical spirit which he had imbibed from his assiduous study of ancient authors. He professes, indeed, that "through a profound respect and religious veneration he has forborne so much as to name any of the sacred and solemn mysteries of Revelation,"<sup>1</sup> but his reticence, which is not always strictly maintained, is of the kind which betokens unbelief. His hostility or indifference to those theological dogmas which he did not regard as resting on the evidence of natural reason is specially apparent in the first and last Treatises. The passage on the Jews in the Letter concerning Enthusiasm is alone sufficient to show how completely he had broken with the idea of specially revealed religions. A good instance of the covert manner in which he conducted his assaults against what he conceived to be the weak or immoral points in the prevalent religious creed of his day is furnished by the following passage, which is taken from the same letter: "We must not only be in ordinary

<sup>1</sup> Miscellaneous Reflections, Misc. V., Ch. 3.

good humour, but in the best of humours, and in the sweetest, kindest disposition of our lives, to understand well what true goodness is, and what those attributes imply which we ascribe with such applause and honour to the Deity. We shall then be able to see best, whether those forms of justice, those degrees of punishment, that temper of resentment, and those measures of offence and indignation, which we vulgarly suppose in God, are suitable to those original ideas of Goodness, which the same Divine Being, or Nature under him, has implanted in us, and which we must necessarily presuppose, in order to give him praise or honour of any kind.”<sup>2</sup>

In opposition to the almost unanimous assumption of professed theologians, Shaftesbury maintained that entire freedom of speculation, and, in consequence, of opinion, extending even to the question of His own existence, cannot be displeasing to a Being, one of whose attributes is perfect benevolence. “It is impossible that any besides an ill-natured man can wish against the Being of a God; for this is wishing against the public, and even against one’s private good too, if rightly understood. But, if a man has not any such ill-will to stifle his belief, he must have surely an unhappy opinion of God, and believe him not so good by far as he knows himself to be, if he imagines that an impartial use of his reason, in any matter of speculation whatsoever, can make him run any risk hereafter; and that a mean denial of his reason, and an affectation of belief in any point too hard for his understanding, can entitle him to any favour in another world. This is being sycophants in religion, mere parasites of devotion. . . . ’Tis the most beggarly refuge imaginable, which is so mightily cried up, and stands as a great maxim with many able men: “That they should strive to have faith, and believe to the utmost; because if, after all,

<sup>2</sup> Letter concerning Enthusiasm, Sect. 4.

there be nothing in the matter, there will be no harm in being thus deceived, but if there be anything, it will be fatal for them not to have believed to the full." But they are so far mistaken that, whilst they have this thought, 'tis certain they can never believe either to their own satisfaction and happiness in this world, or with any advantage of recommendation to another. For, besides that our reason, which knows the cheat, will never rest satisfied on such a bottom, but turn us often adrift and toss us in a sea of doubt and perplexity, we cannot but actually grow worse in our religion, and entertain a worse opinion still of a Supreme Deity, whilst our belief is founded on so injurious a thought of Him."<sup>3</sup>

But, though every man who has the leisure and opportunity should be free to form his own opinions on religion as on all other subjects, there should be an authorized ecclesiastical body to supply a common doctrine and worship for the people at large. "As a notable author of our nation" expresses it, 'tis necessary a people should have a public

<sup>3</sup> Letter concerning Enthusiasm, Sect. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Shaftesbury cites James Harrington, author of the *Oceana*. The particular passage he alludes to is to be found in *The Art of Lawgiving* Bk. III., ch. 2. The chapter begins with the following sentences: "There is nothing more certain or demonstrable to common sense than that the far greater part of mankind, in matters of religion, give themselves up to the public leading. Now a National Religion, rightly established, or not coercive, is not any public driving, but only the public leading. If the Public in this case may not lead such as desire to be led by the Public, and yet a party may lead such as desire to be led by a party, where would be the Liberty of Conscience as to the State?" In the "Preliminaries" to the *Oceana*, he says: "As a Government pretending to Liberty, and yet suppressing Liberty of Conscience, must be a contradiction; so a man that, pleading for the liberty of private conscience, refuses liberty to the national conscience must be absurd. A Commonwealth is nothing else but the national conscience. And, if the conviction of a man's private conscience produces his private religion, the conviction of the national conscience must produce a national religion."

leading in religion. For to deny the magistrate a worship, or take away a National Church, is as mere enthusiasm as the notion which sets up persecution. For why should there not be public walks as well as private gardens? Why not public libraries as well as private education and home-tutors?"<sup>5</sup> Moreover, though no one should be compelled, against his will, to conform to the prescribed worship of the Church established by law, Shaftesbury evidently thinks that it is the better course on the part of the philosopher, if not of all good citizens, to do so. "Every one knows that by Heresy is understood a stubbornness in the will, not a defect merely in the understanding. On this account 'tis impossible that an honest and good-humoured man should be a schismatic or heretic, and affect to separate from his national worship on slight reason, or without severe provocation."<sup>6</sup> As we have seen in the First Chapter,<sup>7</sup> he was himself regular in his attendance at Church and habitually received the Holy Communion. In pursuing this course of conduct, I do not think that he was simply acting for the sake of setting an example to his tenants and dependents, much less that he was playing the hypocrite. He was, as I have said elsewhere, a man of a deeply religious temperament, and, though his own religious feelings were satisfied by the doctrines of Natural Religion and he had evidently no belief in the miraculous aspects of Christianity, he probably thought that a system of practices and dogmas, appealing directly to the senses and imagination, was necessary to the spiritual sustenance of the great mass of mankind, while to the philosopher these same dogmas and practices, philosophically interpreted, might have a moral and even a religious value. At least,

<sup>5</sup> Letter concerning Enthusiasm, Sect. 2.

<sup>6</sup> Miscellaneous Reflections, Misc. 2, Ch. 3

<sup>7</sup> See p. 38.



this is what I would hazard as the most probable explanation of Shaftesbury's somewhat enigmatical frame of mind.

The great blot on Shaftesbury's treatment of religious questions is the tone of banter which he so often assumes. Sometimes this banter approaches grimace, and not infrequently reminds us of Voltaire. Thus, speaking of Revelation, he says: "If I mistake not our author's meaning, he professes to believe, as far as is possible for any one who himself had never experienced any divine communication, whether by dream, vision, apparition, or other supernatural operation; nor was ever present as eye-witness of any sign, prodigy, or miracle whatsoever."<sup>8</sup> Of course, what he means is that nothing short of personal experience affords sufficient evidence of a supernatural occurrence. But why not make this assertion outright, instead of insinuating it under the cover of an ironical remark? When, speaking of himself in the same passage, he goes on to say that "for what is recorded of ages heretofore, the author seems to resign his judgment, with entire condescension, to his superiors," and that "on all occasions he submits most willingly, and with full confidence and trust, to the opinions by law established," his irony appears to be carried to the verge of mendacity. That he did not believe in what is ordinarily, though it may be inaccurately, called the supernatural as distinguished from the natural government of God, is plain to any one who can read between the lines. But, as if to leave no doubt on the subject, in the *Moralists*, Shaftesbury puts in the mouth of one of his characters, who is defending modern miracles, the following argument, to which no reply is attempted: "The attestation of men dead and gone, in behalf of miracles past and at an end, can never surely be of equal force with miracles present. If there were no miracles now-a-days, the world would be

<sup>8</sup> Miscellaneous Reflections, Misc. 2, Ch. 2.

apt to think there never were any. The present must answer for the credibility of the past.”<sup>9</sup> But that he regards the

<sup>9</sup> The Moralists, Part II., Sect. 5. Shaftesbury is undoubtedly right in maintaining, in this section, that miracles afford no logical proof of the existence of God, understanding by God one Supreme Being, all-powerful, all-wise, and all good. We must already believe in the existence of God, before we can determine whether any alleged miracle proceeds from Him or not. Mr. Mill has stated this argument extremely well in his *Logic*, Bk. III., Ch. 25, extending it so as to apply to the evidence, derived from miracles, for the reality of supernatural agencies generally. He maintains that, “if we do not already believe in supernatural agencies, no miracle can prove to us their existence.” The reality of the supernatural agency must have been previously accepted on other grounds. The miracle can only reveal to us its will. Though Shaftesbury’s argument has not so wide an application, it is stated with remarkable force. “What though innumerable miracles from every part assailed the sense, and gave the trembling soul no respite? What though the sky should suddenly open, and all kinds of prodigies appear, voices be heard, or characters read? What would this evince more than ‘That there were certain Powers could do all this’? But ‘what Powers; whether one or more; whether superior or subaltern; mortal or immortal; wise or foolish; just or unjust; good or bad’: this would still remain a mystery; as would the true intention, the infallibility or certainty of whatever these Powers asserted. Their word could not be taken in their own case. They might silence men indeed, but not convince them: since Power can never serve as proof for Goodness; and Goodness is the only pledge of Truth. By Goodness alone Trust is created. By Goodness superior powers may win belief. . . . . To whom, therefore, the laws of this Universe and its government appear just and uniform: to him they speak the government of one Just One; to him they reveal and witness a God; and, laying in him the foundation of this first faith, they fit him for a subsequent one.” Moralists, Pt. II., Sect. 5. This order of proof agrees with that adopted by the early Christian Apologists, who did not adduce miracles, as such, but miracles evincing beneficence, to prove the divine intervention; for evil spirits also were regarded as capable of working wonders, and hence the moral character of a miracle was a most important element in determining the source from which it issued. But these considerations imply that the belief in a God must already exist, before we can infer that any particular miracle proceeds from Him.

belief in modern miracles as sheer fanaticism, he nowhere conceals.

Shaftesbury was perfectly sincere in expressing himself in favour of the maintenance of a Church Establishment; nor would he probably have cared to bring about any serious alterations in the articles and formularies of the English Church as settled at the Reformation. The moderate and tolerant party amongst the Anglican Clergy, the Broad Church party, as we should now call them, seem to have fairly satisfied his ideal of religious teachers. The religion which they taught was not indeed the sublimated or attenuated religion which corresponded with his own convictions, but it had the advantage of laying hold of the feelings of the masses, while it lent support to the civil order and did not unduly interfere with liberty of speculation. In early life, he edited Dr. Whichcote's Sermons; of Bishop Burnet, who was the Bishop of his own diocese, he always speaks with esteem and even admiration; and, in one of his letters to Michael Ainsworth,<sup>1</sup> he praises the bishops, and "dignified churchmen" generally, of his own time, as "the most worthily and justly dignified of any in any age." But to the high churchmen—the preachers of passive obedience, the claimants of sacerdotal powers, and the advocates of a policy of relentless persecution towards dissenters—he seems to have been actuated by a feeling of the deepest animosity. With them, their mode of life, their course of action, and their ways of thinking, he neither had, nor could pretend to have, any sympathy. In the letter from which I have just quoted, speaking of the bishops and dignified clergy, he says: "They are for toleration, inviolable toleration (as our Queen nobly and Christianly said it, in her speech a year or two since); and this is itself intolerable with our high gentlemen, who

<sup>1</sup> Letters to a Young Man at the University, Letter I.

despise the gentleness of their lord and master, and the sweet mild government of our Queen, preferring rather that abominable blasphemous representation of church power, attended with the worst of temporal governments, as we see it in perfection of each kind in France." In a subsequent letter (Letter IX), he warns his protégé that "all the pre-eminence, wealth, or pension," which he may receive, or expect to receive, by help of the clerical character, "is from the public, whence both the authority and the profit is derived, and on which it legally depends; all other pretensions of priests being Jewish and Heathenish, and in our state seditious, disloyal, and factious." In another letter to Ainsworth, dated Reigate, 11th May, 1711, part of which is wrongly incorporated in Letter X. of the printed collection,<sup>2</sup> he complains that "this is the worst time for insolence, riot, pride, and presumption of clergymen, that I ever knew, or have read of; though I have searched far into the characters of high churchmen from the first centuries, in which they grew to be dignified with crowns and purple, to the late times of our reformation and to our present age." The *Characteristics* abound in passages attacking, either obliquely or directly, the intolerance and sacerdotal pretensions of the high-church section of the English clergy. In the Miscellaneous Reflections, there is an elaborate passage<sup>3</sup> in which he traces the growth of dogma and the spirit of persecution in the Christian Church, till at last it culminated in the establishment of the Romish hierarchy. In the spirit and almost in the very words of modern controversy he takes occasion to remark how much more imposing, and even tolerable, are the claims of the Romish Church than those of its imitators in other communions: "In reality, the exercise

<sup>2</sup> See p. 46.

<sup>3</sup> Misc. 2, Ch. 2.

of power, however arbitrary or despotic, seems less intolerable under such a spiritual sovereignty, so extensive, ancient, and of such a long succession, than under the petty tyrannies and mimical polities of some new pretenders. The former may even persecute with a tolerable grace. The latter, who would willingly derive their authority from the former, and graft on their successive right, must necessarily make a very awkward figure. And whilst they strive to give themselves the same air of independency on the civil magistrate, whilst they affect the same authority in government, the same grandeur, magnificence, and pomp in worship, they raise the highest ridicule in the eyes of those who have real discernment and can distinguish originals from copies :

‘O imitatores, servum pecus !’”

There remains one other subject connected with Shaftesbury's literary activity, to the exposition of which, however, it is not necessary that I should devote much space. This is his theory of beauty and art. We have seen that, even in his treatment of morals, the idea of moral beauty, the Greek conception of a harmony or proportion in characters or actions, is always uppermost in his mind. Goodness, Beauty, and Truth, indeed, he regards as all one. “What is beautiful is harmonious and proportionable; what is harmonious and proportionable is true; and what is at once both beautiful and true is, of consequence, agreeable and good.”<sup>4</sup> Truth is a word appropriate to propositions, goodness to actions and characters, and beauty to external objects, whether of nature or art, and it is much more convenient that these words should be confined within their proper provinces than that

<sup>4</sup> Miscellaneous Reflections, Misc. 3, Ch. 2.

they should be used interchangeably. As, however, I have already discussed this question in reference to the words Goodness and Beauty, I need not dwell on it any further. The same tendency or desire to assimilate the conceptions of morals to those of art is shown in the frequent comparison of the moralist or philosopher with the *virtuoso*, a word then in common use to designate what we should now call an amateur.

This analogy, or, as it might almost be styled, identification, pervades Shaftesbury's entire system, and his theory of Ethics, consequently, easily admits of being translated into a theory of æsthetics. Beauty and Morality are conceived of as inherent properties, the one of external objects, the other of actions and characters. Moreover, they are both apprehended under the same conditions, and after the same manner. Lastly, Morality is only Beauty in one of its higher stages. It may be worth while briefly to explain and illustrate these several points.

To begin with the first. Beauty is a quality of objects, as Morality is a quality of characters, dispositions, and actions. "The case is the same in the mental or moral subjects, as in the ordinary bodies or common subjects of sense. The shapes, motions, colours, and proportions of these latter being presented to our eye, there necessarily arises a beauty or deformity, according to the different measure, arrangement, and disposition of their several parts. So in behaviour and actions, when presented to our understanding, there must be found, of necessity, an apparent difference, according to the regularity or irregularity of the subjects."<sup>5</sup> In the Moralists,<sup>6</sup> he tries to state the question with regard to the beauty of external objects in the simplest possible terms, by confining

<sup>5</sup> Inquiry concerning Virtue, Book I., Pt. 2, Sect. 3.  
Pt. III., Sect. 2.

himself to the case of figures. " 'Tis enough," says Theocles, "if we consider the simplest of figures; as either a round ball, a cube, or die. Why is even an infant pleased with the first view of these proportions? Why is the sphere or globe, the cylinder and obelisk preferred; and the irregular figures, in respect of these, rejected and despised?" "I am ready," replies Philocles, "to own there is in certain figures a natural beauty, which the eye finds as soon as the object is presented to it." The ultimate foundation of beauty, then, as of morality, is found in the principles of harmony and proportion, whether of the parts in relation to each other, or of the whole in relation to other wholes. In the case of morality, it may be urged, the idea of harmony and proportion is better replaced by that of Goodness, or tendency to promote the general welfare. And, as applied to Beauty, the analysis is, undoubtedly, very imperfect. It omits to take into consideration the large extent to which our ideas of beauty depend on association with other ideas and emotions, and how much of our own thoughts and moods and feelings we have usually imported into a landscape or a face or a work of art, before our æsthetic judgments on it are definitely formed.

Shaftesbury does not, like Hutcheson, distinguish between a sense of Beauty and a Moral Sense. These are both, with him, one and the same sense, applied to different objects. We have a sense of harmony and proportion, which, as it is con-natural, may be called an instinct. As applied to external objects, it is the sense of beauty; as applied to human actions, characters, and dispositions, it is the moral sense; and, lastly, when applied to the contemplation of the universal frame of things, and the moral government of the world, it becomes a religious sense, by which we apprehend the Supreme Beauty. In its origin, this sense is an instinct, but it admits, in all its appli-

cations, of indefinite cultivation and improvement, and this is the work which ought to form the main occupation of our lives.

The three orders of Beauty are set forth in a passage in the *Moralists*,<sup>7</sup> which is so characteristic of Shaftesbury's point of view, that, notwithstanding the length of the extract, I think it well to lay the greater part of it before the reader.

"Do you not see then, replied Theocles, that you have established three degrees or orders of Beauty? As how?

"Why first, the dead forms, as you properly have called them, which bear a fashion, and are formed, whether by man or nature; but have no forming power, no action, or intelligence. Right.

"Next, and as the second kind, the Forms which form; that is, which have intelligence, action, and operation. Right still.

"Here therefore is double beauty. For here is both the Form (the effect of Mind) and Mind itself. The first kind [is] low and despicable in respect of this other; from whence the dead form receives its lustre and force of beauty. For what is a mere body, though a human one, and ever so exactly fashioned, if inward form be wanting, and the mind be monstrous or imperfect, as in an idiot or savage? This too I can apprehend, said I; but where is the third order?

"Have patience, replied he, and see first whether you have discovered the whole force of this second Beauty? How else should you understand the force of love, or have the power of enjoyment? Tell me, I beseech you, when first you named these the Forming Forms, did you think of no

<sup>7</sup> *Moralists*, Part III., Sect. 2.



other productions of theirs besides the dead kinds, such as the palaces, the coins, the brazen or the marble figures of men? Or did you think of something nearer life?

"I could easily, said I, have added that these forms of ours had a virtue of producing other living forms, like themselves. But this virtue of theirs I thought was from another form above them, and could not properly be called their virtue or art; if in reality there was a superior art, or something artist-like, which guided their hand, and made tools of them in this specious work.

"Happily thought, said he! You have prevented a censure which I hardly imagined you could escape. And here you have unawares discovered that third order of Beauty, which forms not only such as we call mere forms, but even the Forms which form. For we ourselves are notable architects in matter, and can show lifeless bodies brought into form, and fashioned by our own hands: but that which fashions even minds themselves contains in itself all the beauties fashioned by those minds; and is consequently the principle, source, and fountain of all Beauty. It seems so.

"Therefore, whatever beauty appears in our second order of forms, or whatever is derived or produced from thence, all this is eminently, principally, and originally in this last order of Supreme and Sovereign Beauty. True.

"Thus Architecture, Music, and all which is of human invention, resolves itself into this last order. Right, said I: and thus all the enthusiasms of other kinds resolve themselves into ours."

However open to criticism these statements may be, it must at least be acknowledged that the conception of an ascending scale of beauty, rising from the simplest objects of nature, through man, his works and actions, up to the universal frame of things and its Creator, and of a special

organ in man, capable, by development and cultivation, of apprehending these successive stages, is one of peculiar grandeur and sublimity, as worthy of a poet as of a philosopher. The reader, who is acquainted with the works of Plato, will not fail to recognize the thoroughly Platonic spirit which animates Shaftesbury's speculations on these and kindred topics. But the disciple, though the master's mantle is upon him, never fails to retain a marked individuality of his own.

In addition to the many observations on art and beauty which lie scattered up and down his religious and ethical treatises, Shaftesbury wrote two small pieces having express reference to the Fine Arts. These are the "Notion of the historical draught or tablature of the Judgment of Hercules" and the "Letter concerning Design," both of which have been already noticed in the second chapter. The first piece offers suggestions for a painting of the Judgment of Hercules, and contains some very just remarks on the requisites of historical painting in general. Thus, he lays down the rules that in painting of this kind there must be unity of design, that is to say, the tablature must be "a single piece, comprehended in one view, and formed according to one single intelligence, meaning, or design," "constituting a real whole by a natural and necessary relation of its parts, the same as of the members in a natural body;" that there must be unity of time and action, which he calls the rule of consistency, that is to say, that "such passages or events" only are to be set in view, "as have actually subsisted, or, according to nature, might well subsist or happen together, in one and the same instant;" that the subsidiary parts of the picture, such as the landscape or architecture, should not divert the eye from the action, which is the principal design; that

"nothing of the emblematical or enigmatic kind be visibly and directly intermixed," as tending to interfere with the natural simplicity and grace of the piece. These and similar rules have for their object the maintenance of verisimilitude and congruity, and are intended, it must be recollected, for application to historical or mythological pieces, such as exercised the skill of the later Italian painters, rather than to devotional pieces, such as expressed the faith, or love, or awe of the earlier artists. The treatise concludes with some remarks ineuleating the complete subordination of the colouring to the drawing and composition in a picture, to which, probably, few art-critics in our own time would subscribe. "The pleasure" arising from colours "is plainly foreign and separate; as having no concern or share in the proper delight or entertainment which naturally arises from the subject and workmanship itself. For the subject, in respect of pleasure as well as science, is absolutely completed, when the design is executed, and the proposed imitation once accomplished. And thus it always is the best, when the colours are most subdued and made subservient." This criticism only too well accords with the sombre colouring and consequent heaviness of effect which unfavourably distinguish so much of the later Italian art.

That Shaftesbury did not realize the extent to which Italian art had declined in the hands of the later painters is shown by his mentioning the name of Carlo Maratti, at the end of his Letter concerning Design, as one of the painters by whom he would have wished the picture of the Judgment of Hercules to be executed.

I have already noticed<sup>8</sup> some of the more characteristic contents of the Letter concerning Design, namely the prediction that a national school of art would soon arise in

<sup>8</sup> See pp. 60, 61.

England, the depreciation of Gothic architecture, and the attack on Sir Christopher Wren. I may add that the term Gothic is invariably used by Shaftesbury as a term of reproach, and that he always assumes, as a proposition not likely to be disputed, that Gothic art is contrary to all sound principles of taste. Thus, in one of the passages in the *Characteristics*<sup>9</sup> where he is drawing a parallel between Art and Virtue, and maintaining that both are founded in nature, he says: "For Harmony is Harmony by nature, let men judge ever so ridiculously of music. So is Symmetry and Proportion founded still in nature, let men's fancy prove ever so barbarous, or their fashions ever so Gothic in their architecture, sculpture, or whatever other designing art." That these narrow canons of criticism, as applied to sculpture and architecture, were all but universal in Shaftesbury's time and for about a century afterwards, and that they were followed by a reaction almost as complete, as exclusive, and as un-reasoning, which has lasted into our own days, I need hardly remark. There is one other point in the Letter concerning Design which I ought not to pass over in silence. This is the contention that a flourishing condition of the arts depends not so much on the patronage of courts and private persons as on the taste and genius of the people at large, and that a people that has learnt to exercise its judgment freely on political matters is best qualified to pronounce an opinion on questions of art. "'Tis not the nature of a court (such as courts generally are) to improve, but rather corrupt a taste. And what is in the beginning set wrong by their example, is hardly ever afterwards recoverable in the genius of a nation." "Without a public voice, knowingly guided and directed, there is nothing which can raise a true ambition in the artist; nothing which can exalt the genius of the workman, or make

<sup>9</sup> Advice to an Author, Pt. III., Sect. 3.

him emulous of after-fame, and of the approbation of his country and of posterity. . . . Everything co-operates, in a free state, towards the improvement of art and science. And for the designing arts in particular, such as architecture, painting, and statuary, they are in a manner linked together. The taste of one kind brings necessarily that of the others along with it. When the free spirit of a nation turns itself this way, judgments are formed; critics arise; the public eye and ear improve; a right taste prevails, and in a manner forces its way. Nothing is so improving, nothing so natural, so congenial to the liberal arts, as that reigning liberty and high spirit of a people, which, from the habit of judging in the highest matters for themselves, makes them freely judge of other subjects, and enter thoroughly into the characters as well of men and manners, as of the products or works of men in art and science." The progress of the arts is affected by many other causes, such as climate and physical geography, wealth, leisure, the peculiar temperament of a people, the æsthetic or unæsthetic character of its religious beliefs, but I cannot doubt that Shaftesbury is right in connecting it, as a general rule, with freedom of thought and of political institutions. The habit of unrestrained discussion on one class of subjects begets a similar habit of discussion on others, and hence one indispensable condition of attaining any high excellence in art is satisfied, namely, free criticism. The mental activity too, which is displayed in politics and speculation, has a tendency to multiply itself and flow over into other channels; and, thus, a flourishing state of art and literature usually, though not invariably, accompanies a wide-spread interest in philosophy and politics. If we turn from these *à priori* considerations to an examination of facts, we shall find that our anticipations are verified in at least the two most notable instances of the outburst of

artistic genius which the world has known—the age of Pericles at Athens and the era of the Renaissance in the Italian Republics. To discuss the cases of real or seeming exceptions, where art has flourished or appeared to flourish in periods of speculative and political torpor, or where in periods of speculative and political activity art has not, or, at least, appears not to have flourished, would compel me to digress far too widely from the subject immediately before me. It may be enough to recall what I have already said, that the causes of which Shaftesbury is speaking, though very powerful, are only some amongst the many causes which may promote the development of art, and hence that the effect may be produced in a certain measure even though they are absent, and that, when they are present, they may be counteracted, in whole or in part, by adverse influences of other kinds. It may be added that, on a superficial view of a period of history, we are often apt to suppose quiescence when, on a closer view, we should find that there are many and important activities at work. Specially is this the case with regard to the period of modern history which we call the Middle Ages, or at least the later part of it. The magnificent churches, which were then spread over the face of Europe, were indeed reared in ages of faith, but not, by any means, in ages of political or even intellectual stagnation.

Shaftesbury's enthusiastic and passionate love of the beauties of nature is constantly exemplified throughout his works, but it appears, as might be expected, most prominently in the prose hymn to Nature and God, which is put into the mouth of Theocles in the *Moralists*. There is, it must be owned, a certain stiffness and affectation of style about this production, but I entertain no doubt that it expresses the genuine sentiments of its author.

## CHAPTER V.

## RECEPTION AND INFLUENCE OF SHAFTESBURY'S WRITINGS.

IN attempting to give an account of the reception of Shaftesbury's writings, I am at once met with the difficulty, that, whereas it would be desirable to treat the reception of his views on ethics separately from that of his views on religion, it is impossible to do so, without having recourse to an inconvenient amount of repetition. For the positions that moral distinctions have an independent basis, not being founded merely on the positive commands of God, and that we ought to follow virtue for its own sake, because of its inherent beauty, and not from the hope of future reward or the fear of future punishment, are at once ethical and theological. Hence, there being so much common ground, I shall not attempt any division according to subjects, but shall consider each criticism or notice of his writings as a whole, and, in trying to arrange these criticisms and notices shall, for the most part, follow the chronological order.

The Letter concerning Enthusiasm was rapidly followed by three replies. These were entitled: "Remarks upon a Letter by a Lord concerning Enthusiasm, not written in raillery but good humour;" "Bart'lemy Fair, or an Enquiry after Wit, by Mr. Wotton;"<sup>1</sup> and "Reflections upon a Letter concerning

<sup>1</sup> This was probably Dr. William Wotton, a voluminous author, who, in early life, was celebrated as a youthful prodigy. He was entered, in 1676, at Catherine Hall, Cambridge, by the Master, Dr. John Eachard, as "*Gulielmus Wottonus infra decem annos nec Hammondo nec Grotio secundus.*"

Enthusiasm." The first and last were published anonymously, but the last is attributed to Dr. Edward Fowler, Bishop of Gloucester. It could now be of no service to any one to disinter these pamphlets. They undoubtedly make good two points against Shaftesbury: first, that, in ridiculing the "enthusiasm" of the French Prophets, he was glancing obliquely at supernatural pretensions in general, and thinking at least as much of the English clergy as of the Cevinol peasants; second, that his rule that Ridicule is the best test of Truth is often a most unsafe guide. These brochures betray much acerbity, and it is a sad proof of the unfairness of theological controversy, when we find a divine usually so moderate as Dr. Edward Fowler charging Shaftesbury with blasphemy, because he attacks what he conceives to be certain unworthy conceptions of God. The argument as to what representations are and what are not worthy of the Divine Nature must, surely, be open to every theological disputant, or else there is no superstition, however gross, whose position would not be impregnable.

The Letter concerning Enthusiasm was quickly translated into French, and in 1709 was reviewed by Le Clerc in the *Bibliothèque Choisie*. The reviewer says that it must be read with attention, in order to avoid giving it a sense and an aim which it has not. He does not know the author, but, whoever he may be, he is a man of wit and intelligence (*homme d'esprit*), who is thoroughly master of his subject, and who writes in English with much delicacy and vivacity. The remaining treatises were reviewed as they appeared, the estimate formed of them being invariably a favourable one.<sup>2</sup> To the principal treatise, the Inquiry Concerning Virtue, Le Clerc bears testimony that it is as solid in its matter, as regular

<sup>2</sup> See *Bibliothèque Choisie*, Tomes 19, 21, 23. These reviews were translated into English, and published in a small tract in 1712.



in its method, and as well written as any piece on Morals that he has read. The author's general aim in these treatises, he sums up, is, so far as I can comprehend, to establish Liberty and Virtue, the two things the most precious and the most useful that men can possess; his design deserves at least, in this respect, to be applauded by all those who equally hate Slavery and Vice, the two things most worthy of hatred, of which one has ever heard speak amongst men.

Shaftesbury sent a copy of the *Characteristics* to Leibnitz, who, in a letter to Grimarest, dated June 4th, 1712, expressed himself as highly delighted with them.<sup>3</sup> Leibnitz had already seen and criticized the Letter concerning Enthusiasm, not being acquainted with its authorship. His praise of it is qualified, and he evidently regards Shaftesbury's principle of raillery as capable of dangerous applications. But, when the complete works were before him, he changed his tone. From a Lucian, he said, the author had become a Plato.<sup>4</sup> By way of acknowledgment for the copy of the *Characteristics*, Leibnitz returned a paper of remarks, which reached Shaftesbury at Naples in 1712, and is said to have given him great satisfaction.<sup>5</sup> This "Judgment," though it took exception to Shaftesbury's advocacy of the unsparing use of ridicule and to his contempt for metaphysical speculations, was, on the whole, highly favourable. I have already quoted its encomium

<sup>3</sup> "Mylord Shaftesbury, Anglois, fils du Comte de Shaftesbury, autrefois grand Chancelier d'Angleterre, a publié des ouvrages sur la Philosophie et la Morale, où il y a bien des choses qui me contentent extrêmement. Il m'a envoyé ses ouvrages," etc. Leibnitii Opera, Ed. Dutens, Tom v., p. 67.

<sup>4</sup> Leibnitz to M. Remond. Ed. Dutens, Tom v., p. 20. Recueil de Des Maizeaux, Tome ii., p. 191.

<sup>5</sup> Preface by Des Maizeaux to the Recueil, p. lxxv. The remarks themselves occur in the Recueil, Tome ii., pp. 267-86. They are also contained in the fifth volume of Dutens' Edition of the works of Leibnitz.

on the Moralists. The Inquiry concerning Virtue it pronounces to be thoroughly systematic, and to contain well-established sentiments on Virtue and Happiness. "It seems to me," says Leibnitz, "that I could very easily reconcile them with my own language and opinions; for, as I have explained in the Preface to my Code, Justice is, at bottom, nothing but love in unison with wisdom."<sup>6</sup>

The *Characteristics*, for a book of that time, had a rapid circulation. In little more than twenty years, it passed through five editions. At first, the interest which it excited was mainly theological, but it was soon recognized that it had started important theories, which must henceforth be taken account of, in the science of Ethics. Bernard de Mandeville was the first moralist of any eminence who attacked Shaftesbury's system. Mandeville, who is described by Sir James Mackintosh, not without justification, as "the buffoon and sophister of the ale-house," was the eighteenth-century representative of Hobbes—much coarser, much less able, and vastly inferior as a writer, but still holding, generally, the same views as to the baseness and selfishness of human nature. In one of the Essays which are appended to the second edition of the *Fable of the Bees* (1723), entitled "A Search into the Nature of Society," Mandeville directly joins issue with Shaftesbury. "The generality of Moralists and Philosophers have hitherto agreed that there could be no virtue without self-denial; but a late author, who is now much read by men of sense, is of a contrary opinion, and imagines that men, without any trouble or violence upon themselves, may be naturally virtuous. He seems to require and expects good-

<sup>6</sup> "La Justice dans le fond n'est autre chose qu'une charité conforme à la sagesse." In the Preface to the *Codex Juris Gentium Diplomaticus*, Leibnitz defines Justice as "Caritas sapientis, hoc est sequens sapientiæ dictata."

ness in his species, as we do a sweet taste in grapes and China oranges, of which, if any of them are sour, we boldly pronounce that they are not come to that perfection their nature is capable of. This noble writer fancies that, as man is made for society, so he ought to be born with a kind affection to the whole, of which he is a part, and a propensity to seek the welfare of it. In pursuance of this supposition, he calls every action performed with regard to the public good, virtuous; and all selfishness, wholly excluding such a regard, vice. In respect to our species, he looks upon virtue and vice as permanent realities that must ever be the same in all countries and all ages, and imagines that a man of sound understanding, by following the rules of good sense, may not only find out that *Pulchrum et Honestum* both in morality and the works of art and nature, but likewise govern himself by his reason with as much ease and readiness as a good rider manages a well-taught horse by the bridle."

Allowing for a slight tone of exaggeration, this is not an unskilful representation of Shaftesbury's system. Mandeville adds, with undoubted accuracy: "Two systems cannot be more opposite than his Lordship's and mine." If Shaftesbury takes too roseate a view of human nature, it would be impossible to portray it in darker tints than those laid on by Mandeville. But this author does not confine himself to feelings which are directly and obviously selfish, having for their object the mere gratification of material and selfish wants. He also largely employs, in the construction of his system, what may be called, according as we view them from different sides, the indirectly selfish, or semi-social feelings of Pride and Vanity. It is through these mainly that our desires are enlarged, and that society has attained its present vast proportions. What he altogether refuses to admit, as explanatory of any of the phenomena of human life, is any

original feeling of sympathy, kindness, or sociability. "Man loves company, as he does everything else, for his own sake." "The sociableness of man arises only from these two things—the multiplicity of his desires, and the continual opposition he meets with in his endeavours to gratify them." "No societies could have sprung from the amiable virtues and loving qualities of man, but, on the contrary, all of them must have had their origin from his wants, his imperfections, and the variety of his appetites." "It would be utterly impossible, either to raise any multitudes into a populous, rich, and flourishing nation, or, when so raised, to keep and maintain them in that condition, without the assistance of what we call evil, both natural and moral."<sup>7</sup> Nor have the so-called virtues of the individual any higher or purer origin than the constitution of society. "The moral Virtues are the political offspring which Flattery begat upon Pride." And, in a spirit which we should now stigmatize as thoroughly unhistorical, we are told that these two were brought together by "the skilful management of wary politicians," in order that "the ambitious might reap the more benefit from, and govern vast numbers of" their subjects "with the greater ease and security."<sup>8</sup> Of course, it is by a systematic and habitual hypocrisy that we conceal from one another the origin and true nature of our feelings, at once masking the sentiments which we really entertain, and pretending to others which have no foundation in fact. "In all civil societies, men are taught insensibly to be hypocrites from their cradle; nobody dares to own that he gets by public calamities, or even by the loss of private persons. The sexton would be stoned, should he wish openly for the death of the parishioners, though everybody knew that he had nothing else to live upon."<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> A Search into the Nature of Society.

<sup>8</sup> Inquiry into the Origin of Moral Virtue.

<sup>9</sup> A Search into the Nature of Society.

Though, as I have already pointed out in preceding chapters, Shaftesbury's account of human nature, as well as his analysis of moral virtue, requires several qualifications, in order to render it conformable with facts, I think that his exaggerations are far less remote from the truth than those of Mandeville. The feelings which attract and bind men to others seem to me, with Shaftesbury, to be as primary and as powerful as those which centre wholly in themselves. But, even granting that the social propensities, which now appear to us to be instinctive, admit of being traced back to the most indisputably selfish source, we are still far removed from the conclusions to which Mandeville would bring us. As Mr. Leslie Stephen remarks,<sup>1</sup> the fallacy which he commits is akin to that which occurs, when men argue that, if we are descended from apes, we must be apes still. "Mandeville assumes that, because our virtues took their rise in selfish or brutal forms, they are still brutality and selfishness in masquerade." The theory that the higher elements in human nature are successively formed out of the lower, but so transformed by the change that they put on an entirely new character, was afterwards started by Hartley. According to him, our moral progress begins in mere self-seeking, but ends in the pursuit of virtue for virtue's sake and in the disinterested love of God and man.

Mandeville's "Search into the Nature of Society" contains, after the controversial manner of that time, a personal attack upon Shaftesbury. "A man that has been brought up in ease and affluence, if he is of a quiet indolent nature, learns to shun everything that is troublesome, and chooses to curb his passions, more because of the inconveniences that arise from the eager pursuit after pleasure than any dislike he has to sensual enjoyments." It is possible that such a person

<sup>1</sup> *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, Ch. 9.

may "have a better opinion of his inward state than it really deserves, and believe himself virtuous, because his passions lie dormant." Shaftesbury should have illustrated his principles of benevolence and patriotism, not by living in retirement and inactivity, but by serving his country in the field or by attempting to retrieve its ruined finances.

In 1728, Mandeville published a second part of the *Fable of the Bees* in the form of Dialogues. In these, Horatio is supposed to be a disciple of Shaftesbury, while Cleomenes represents the opinions of Mandeville. Shaftesbury's own weapon of banter is turned against him, and much fun is made out of the supposition of persons in low employments and humble positions in life being actuated solely by a regard to the public weal. "The advantage that is justly expected from his writings can never be universally felt, before that public spirit, which he recommended, comes down to the meanest tradesmen, whom you would endeavour to exclude from the generous sentiments and noble principles that are already so visible in many." Throughout this book, Mandeville ungenerously attempts to bring odium on Shaftesbury by representing him as the antagonist of revealed religion. His "design was to establish heathen virtue on the ruins of Christianity," while Mandeville insinuates that, by insisting on the universal corruption of human nature and demonstrating the impossibility of virtue, he had himself earned the right to be regarded as a defender of the faith. How far he was ingenuous in putting forth this claim, may be determined by any one who will take the trouble to look through a work, which he published in 1723, entitled *Free Thoughts on Religion, the Church, and National Happiness*.

The treatises contained in Mandeville's first part of the *Fable of the Bees* were answered in 1724 by Dr. Richard Fiddes, a clergyman of the Church of England, and chaplain

to Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford. The title of Dr. Fiddes' work is *A General Treatise of Morality formed upon the Principles of Natural Reason only*. In the Preface, he defends Shaftesbury against the attacks of Mandeville, and praises him for having asserted, in the strongest terms, the immutable distinction of Moral Good and Evil, as well as for having, in his *Inquiry concerning Virtue*, "employed some very pertinent and beautiful illustrations in proof of it." Fiddes guards himself against being supposed to approve of Shaftesbury's employment of Ridicule, but thinks it "more surprising that a young nobleman should have published so many tracts, so generally read by men of sense, than that there should be so few errors found in them." His own ethical theory, while it places the moral faculty in the reason and not a sense, adopts Shaftesbury's idea of an analogy between Beauty and Virtue, and makes the rule of action to consist in the imitation of that all-perfect Being, who observes Order in all His works, proposing to Himself the most worthy ends and attaining them by the most regular and simple means.

Hutcheson's relation to Shaftesbury may at present be passed over, as his theories will form the special subject of the latter part of this volume. When his two first Essays were published in 1725, it was stated on the title-page that "the principles of the late Earl of Shaftesbury are explained and defended against the Author of the *Fable of the Bees*." In the Preface, Hutcheson (who, it must be recollected, was an influential Presbyterian Minister, as well as a Professor of Philosophy), while regretting the tone which Shaftesbury had assumed towards Christianity, says "it is a very needless attempt" to recommend his writings; for "they will be esteemed, while any reflection remains among men." There are indeed those who "search into his writings," simply for the sake of finding "insinuations against Christianity, that

they may be the less restrained from their debaucheries," but how would "his indignation have been moved" against these men, whose "low minds are incapable of relishing those noble sentiments of Virtue and Honour, which he has placed in so lovely a light."

Of Balguy's *Letter to a Deist*, published in 1726, I shall speak subsequently.<sup>2</sup>

In 1729, there appeared a new edition of Butler's *Sermons*, with a Preface. This Preface contains a criticism of Shaftesbury's theory of Virtue. Butler does himself credit by confining himself entirely to philosophical issues. He acknowledges that Shaftesbury "has shown, beyond all contradiction, that virtue is naturally the interest or happiness, and vice the misery of such a creature as man, placed in the circumstances in which we are in this world." Further, "he thought it a plain matter of fact, as it undoubtedly is, which none could deny but from mere affectation," "that mankind, upon reflection, feels an approbation of what is good and disapprobation of the contrary." So far as he goes, then, Shaftesbury entirely falls in with Butler's conception of a sound moral theory. But there is one material point in which he is deficient. "The not taking into consideration the authority, which is implied in the idea of reflex approbation or disapprobation, seems a material deficiency or omission in Lord Shaftesbury's Inquiry concerning Virtue." Before examining this charge, it will be necessary to state briefly what Butler himself understood by the authority which attaches to the idea of moral approbation. According to the scheme of human nature which he usually, though not invariably, follows, man possesses, in addition to the several particular appetites, passions, and affections, and to what may be called the general principles of benevolence and self-love, a certain directing or sovereign

<sup>2</sup> See p. 159.



principle of Conscience or Reflection, which is "in kind and in nature supreme over all others, and which bears its own authority of being so." Not only is it, as a matter of fact, supreme, but its supremacy is attested in all its operations. "You cannot form a notion of this faculty, conscience, without taking in judgment, direction, superintendency. This is a constituent part of the idea, that is, of the faculty itself; and to preside and govern, from the very economy and constitution of man, belongs to it. Had it strength, as it has right; had it power, as it has manifest authority, it would absolutely govern the world."<sup>3</sup> That this principle (which Butler apparently regards as having been, once for all, implanted in us by God exactly in its present condition, and as being an equally trustworthy guide in all men) does invariably direct our conduct, is not asserted; otherwise, according to Butler's theory, we should always act rightly. What is meant, then, must be simply that, having once, on reflection (a process, it may be observed, which he does not sufficiently analyze), determined an act to be right or wrong, we cannot divest ourselves of the idea that we *ought* to perform or have performed it, to refrain or have refrained from it, as the case may be. However powerful the other parts of our nature, and however much, as a matter of fact, one or more of them may predominate, there is no one of them which can ever silence the still small voice of approbation or reprobation which applauds or condemns our acts as morally good or evil. "Interest and passion" may "come in, and be too strong for reflection and conscience," but still reflection and conscience are always present with us to bear witness against them. Now it may at once be acknowledged that Shaftesbury seems to admit that a man may altogether lose the moral sense,<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Sermon II.

<sup>4</sup> See Inquiry concerning Virtue, Bk. I., Pt. 3, Sects. 1, 2.

though such a case would, of course, be extremely exceptional, whereas Butler seems to maintain that the conscience can never be wholly silenced. Moreover, he insists much less emphatically than Butler on the absolute character of the moral faculty, regarding it, apparently, as capable of constant improvement or deterioration, thereby undoubtedly expressing himself in far closer conformity with facts. But, taking the case of a man whose moral constitution is in a normal condition, can we fairly say that the "Moral Sense" of Shaftesbury is less authoritative than the "Conscience" of Butler? Both have for their appropriate object the discrimination between right and wrong. Both not only issue directions with regard to future actions, but pronounce a judgment on actions already performed. And in the view of Shaftesbury, as well as of Butler, and this is the point to which I particularly wish to direct attention, no amount of pleasure is sufficient to compensate for the pains arising from an outraged Conscience. "To want Conscience, or natural sense of the odiousness of crime and injustice, is to be most of all miserable in life; but, where Conscience or Sense of this sort remains, there whatever is committed against it must of necessity, by means of Reflection, be continually shameful, grievous, and offensive."<sup>5</sup> In the "Conclusion" with which Shaftesbury sums up the Inquiry concerning Virtue, he states, as the results of his examination; that "To be wicked or vicious is to be miserable and unhappy;" "That every vicious action must be self-injurious and ill;" "That the state which is consequent to this defection of nature is of all others the most horrid, oppressive, and miserable;" finally, "That Virtue is the Good and Vice the Ill of every-one." Now, if all this be the case, and if any normally constituted man be fully conscious that it is so, it is difficult to see how the "Moral

<sup>5</sup> Inquiry, Bk. II., Pt. 2, § 1.

Sense" could well carry with it more "authority and obligation" than it does. All obligation and authority must ultimately repose upon some sanction, but could the sanctions of a virtuous life be stated in more emphatic language, or in language more likely to influence mankind, than that in which Shaftesbury states them?

It is part of Butler's charge against Shaftesbury's system that he acknowledges that an "ill judgment on the happiness of Virtue" is "without remedy."<sup>6</sup> The words quoted are not well chosen. What Shaftesbury means is that, if a man were entirely uninfluenced by the love or fear of God (he is speaking of an Atheist), and, moreover, experienced no pleasure from the consciousness of well-doing or remorse from the consciousness of evil-doing, any case, in which he thought it to his interest to act viciously, would be without remedy. But this is no more than to say that a man, who is entirely deaf to all religious and moral sanctions, will be guided solely by a view to his own selfish and material interests—surely, an obvious truism, supposing that the conditions can be satisfied. We have only to substitute the term "conscience" for the term "moral sense," and ask what arguments we can address to a man in whom conscience and all religious emotion is stifled, and Butler is plainly in the same difficulty as Shaftesbury. The fact is that moral considerations appeal only to men whose moral constitution is in a fairly normal condition. A man, who is lost, as we say, to a sense of right and wrong (happily not a very common case), can only be kept straight by the prospect of reward or punishment, present or future. Society, the laws, religious hopes and terrors of the coarser kind, can alone supply the remedy which conscience and the higher religious sanctions have ceased to afford.

I think it probable that Butler would have refused to admit

<sup>6</sup> Inquiry, Bk. I., Pt. 3, § 3.

the possibility of the case I have put—a man in whom the conscience has entirely ceased to assert itself. And here, perhaps, we have the main difference between his conception of the moral faculty and that of Shaftesbury—that, whereas, according to Shaftesbury, the “moral sense” may exist in different men in the most varying degrees, and may conceivably be extinguished altogether; according to Butler, the “conscience” is pretty nearly uniform in all men, and can never be wholly lost. But, even on the admission that there are a few rare and exceptional cases in which the conscience exists in only a very low degree (and to deny the occurrence of such cases is surely to ignore obvious facts of human nature), it appears to me that the difficulty, for which Shaftesbury can find no remedy, is one which Butler’s system is equally unable to meet.

The next criticism of Shaftesbury which merits notice is that of Bishop Berkeley, contained in the third Dialogue of *Alciphron, or the Minute Philosopher*, which appeared in 1732. I agree with Mr. Leslie Stephen<sup>7</sup> in thinking that “Berkeley’s *Minute Philosopher* is the least admirable performance of that admirable writer.” His remarks on Shaftesbury seem to me to be mainly conceived in the narrow temper of theological polemic rather than in that broad and candid spirit which befits one philosopher examining the system of another. To insinuate that Shaftesbury was a man “without one grain of religion,” and to represent him as so little in earnest about virtue as only, “after a nice inquiry and balancing on both sides,” to conclude that “we ought to prefer virtue to vice,” are sheer calumnies, which the violence of theological partisanship can alone excuse. And even that can hardly excuse the personal attack on Shaftesbury, under the name of Cratylus, in which the refined and gentle Berkeley

<sup>7</sup> *English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, Ch. 9.

verges on coarseness. But fairness to an opponent in a controversy, we must recollect, was, at that time, regarded rather as a weakness than as a virtue. Amongst the specific points in Shaftesbury's ethical theory which Berkeley criticizes are the vagueness of his idea of moral beauty, his conception of a moral sense, different in kind from the other principles of our nature, the attempt to construct a moral system independently of religion, and, above all, the slight stress laid upon the consideration of future rewards and punishments, as a sanction of morality. On this last point there can be no doubt that Berkeley misrepresents Shaftesbury's position. Any one who knew the *Characteristics* only through the *Alciphron* would suppose that Shaftesbury not only entirely repudiated the sanctions afforded by the expectation of a future life, but even denied its possibility.<sup>8</sup> And yet, as we have seen in previous chapters, he looks forward to a future life as repairing the imperfections and inequalities of

<sup>8</sup> Crito says to Alciphron, who represents a disciple of Shaftesbury: "The love therefore that you bear to moral beauty, and your passion for abstracted truth, will not suffer you to think with patience of those fraudulent impositions upon mankind—Providence, the Immortality of the Soul, and a future retribution of rewards and punishments." That Shaftesbury himself maintained the first of these doctrines enthusiastically, if at least by Providence Berkeley means the same thing as the Moral Government of the Universe, is shown abundantly by the quotations which I have given in ch. iv. The passages quoted on pp. 84-5 of ch. iii., and on pp. 111-12 of ch. iv., are, I think, quite sufficient to prove that he believed in a future life, compensating for the apparent injustice to which the virtuous man is often exposed, in the present condition of things. Such a state, of course, implies future rewards, but the absence of reward, or even a gradation of rewards, implies, in a certain sense, punishment. Moreover, the idea that vice is attended by misery here (and, if here, why not hereafter?) is in accordance with the whole genius of Shaftesbury's philosophy. Again, when he refers to the sanction of future rewards and punishments, much as he may disparage it, when compared with the higher sanctions of the moral sense and the love of God, he speaks in the

our present condition,<sup>9</sup> and admits the sanctions of future rewards and punishments, not indeed as the highest sanctions, which they certainly are not, but as being on the same level with those of society and human law.<sup>1</sup> The most effective thing which Berkeley says against Shaftesbury is that his principles are inadequate to influence the mass of mankind. "Whatever may be the effect of pure theory upon certain select spirits, of a peculiar make, or in some other parts of the world, I do verily think that, in this country of ours, reason, religion, and law are all together little enough to subdue the outward to the inner man; and that it must argue a wrong head and weak judgment to suppose that without them men will be enamoured of the golden mean." "In no case is it to be hoped that τὸ καλὸν will be the leading idea of the many, who have quick senses, strong passions, and gross intellects." Berkeley's own ethical theory, as Professor Fraser says, was a kind of Theological Utilitarianism. The source of moral obligation is the Divine Will, the end of moral action is the general well-being of all men, and the main motive to practise morality is a regard to our own eternal interests. Though less coarsely stated, Berkeley's system is, in fact, fundamentally the same as that of Locke.<sup>2</sup>

tone of a man who regards it as a real, and not merely an imaginary, sanction. On the *immortality* of the soul, as distinct from its future existence, I cannot recall any passage containing an explicit statement. But the following words, contained in the Fourth Letter to a Young Man at the University, seem to imply the belief: "And even heaven itself can be no other than the addition of grace to grace, virtue to virtue, and knowledge to knowledge; by which we may still more and more comprehend the chief Virtue, and highest excellence, the giver and dispenser of All."

<sup>9</sup> See ch. iv., pp. 111-12.

<sup>1</sup> See ch. iii., pp. 83-7, where I have discussed at length Shaftesbury's views on the several sanctions of morality.

<sup>2</sup> See particularly the Sermon on Passive Obedience, printed in Fraser's edition of Berkeley's Works, Vol. iii., pp. 103-139.

Berkeley's attack on Shaftesbury provoked a curious rejoinder, in which the author affects to believe that the *Minute Philosopher* is a forgery. This pamphlet is dated 1734, and bears the title: *A Vindication of the Reverend D——B——y from the scandalous imputation of being author of a late book entitled Alciphron or the Minute Philosopher*. It brings forward very effectively various passages from the *Characteristics* in reply to Berkeley's criticisms, and then proceeds to carry on the war against the orthodox divines, by charging Butler with having repeated Shaftesbury's theories, without acknowledgment, in the first edition of his *Sermons*, and grossly misrepresented them in the Preface to his second edition. That Butler's criticism of Shaftesbury for not having taken into consideration the authority of conscience rests on insufficient grounds, I have already stated my opinion. But, though there is much resemblance between the moral systems of Butler and Shaftesbury, there is hardly room for a charge of plagiarism. Had Butler's system been unfolded in a formal treatise, it would certainly have been strange if Shaftesbury's name had been passed over in silence; but he was hardly bound to mention it either in the text or the scanty notes of a short collection of Sermons, whose primary object was probably religious edification, and the future reputation of which he can scarcely himself have foreseen.

In the years 1733, 1734, a wide circulation was given to Shaftesbury's theories on Natural Religion, and specially to his scheme of optimism, by the publication of Pope's Essay on Man. Several lines, especially of the First Epistle, are simply statements from the Moralists done into verse. Whether, however, these were taken immediately by Pope from Shaftesbury, or whether they came to him through the papers which Bolingbroke<sup>3</sup> had prepared for his use, we have no

<sup>3</sup> On Bolingbroke's connexion with the *Essay on Man*, see Elwin's

data for determining. All we can say is that, so far as Pope himself was concerned, his optimism must have been derived from an English source. Of Leibnitz, scraps of whose philosophy had, however, filtered into the Essay through Bolingbroke, he professed himself, some years later, as entirely ignorant.<sup>4</sup>

Voltaire frequently mentions Shaftesbury. In the *Lettres sur les Anglais* or *Lettres Philosophiques*,<sup>5</sup> published in 1734, he insists on the identity of Shaftesbury's religious and philosophical system with that of the *Essay on Man*. After highly lauding Pope's poem, he proceeds to say that the main argument of it is to be found entire in the *Characteristics*. "And I do not know why," he adds, "Mr. Pope should have ascribed the merit of it exclusively to Lord Bolingbroke, without saying a word of the celebrated Shaftesbury, the pupil of Locke."<sup>6</sup> In later life, as is well known, Voltaire adopted a different attitude towards optimism, if not towards theism itself. The maxim "Whatever is, is best" presented itself to him as not only untrue, but ridiculous. And this change of mind is exemplified in his language about

Introduction to that poem, Pope's Works, Vol. ii. Bolingbroke's own sentiments on Philosophy and Natural Religion are to be found in the Essays and Fragments, printed in his collected works.

<sup>4</sup> See a letter to Warburton, quoted by Mr. Elwin, Pope's Works, Vol. ii., p. 293. "It cannot be unpleasant to you to know that I never in my life read a line of Leibnitz."

<sup>5</sup> Letter xxii. Cp. Dictionnaire Philosophique, Art. "Bien," and the Preface to the Poem on the Earthquake of Lisbon. Pope mentions the Inquiry concerning Virtue as well as the Moralists, as having supplied material for the *Essay on Man*.

<sup>6</sup> *L'Essai sur l'Homme* de Pope me paraît le plus beau poëme didactique, le plus utile, le plus sublime qu'on ait jamais fait dans aucune langue. Il est vrai que le fond s'en trouve tout entier dans les *Caractéristiques* du lord Shaftesbury; et je ne sais pourquoi M. Pope en fait uniquement honneur à M de Bolingbroke, sans dire un mot du célèbre Shaftesbury, élève de Locke.



Shaftesbury. Contrasting the lives of optimists with their theories, he says of Shaftesbury that, though he made optimism the mode, he was himself a most miserable man.<sup>7</sup> This statement, if not entirely without foundation, is at least a gross exaggeration. Voltaire, like many other writers who have obtained a reputation for brilliancy, when he found an epigram neatly expressing a preconceived idea, did not always pause to inquire whether it was an accurate representation of facts.

Warburton, in his *Dedication of the Divine Legation to the Free-Thinkers* (1738), has a rambling attack upon Shaftesbury, in which he accuses him of cruel and unworthy treatment of Locke, "the honour of this age and the instructor of the future." It was Locke's love of Christianity, he says, "that seems principally to have exposed him to his pupil's bitterest insults." The maxim that "Ridicule is the test of Truth" is justly handled with severity. The "moral sense" is treated with contumely. At the same time, it is acknowledged that Shaftesbury "had many excellent qualities, both as a man and a writer." Warburton's tribute to his personal character has been already quoted.<sup>8</sup> "In his writings," he adds, "he hath shown how largely he had imbibed the deep sense, and how naturally he could copy the gracious manner of Plato."

The continued interest felt in Shaftesbury's writings is shown by the appearance, in 1751, of an elaborate monograph entitled *Essays on the Characteristics*, by John Brown, M.A. Brown, who was afterwards appointed Vicar of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, is best known for his *Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times*, of which seven editions were printed in little more than a year. He was himself a liberal divine of very varied culture, and entertained strong sym-  
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<sup>7</sup> *Il faut prendre un Parti*, a brochure published in 1772.

<sup>8</sup> See p. 40.

thies with the cause of liberty, both civil and ecclesiastical. It is said that he was moved to write on the *Characteristics* by Warburton, and that the idea of a special refutation of Shaftesbury had been suggested to Warburton by Pope, who told him that "to his knowledge the *Characteristics* had done more harm to Revealed Religion in England than all the works of infidelity put together."<sup>9</sup> Brown is, for the most part, a courteous antagonist. The opening sentence of his work bears testimony to the wide-spread popularity of Shaftesbury as an author. "It has been the fate of Lord Shaftesbury's *Characteristics*, beyond that of most other books, to be idolized by one party, and detested by another. While the first regard it as a work of perfect excellence, as containing everything that can render mankind wise and happy; the latter are disposed to rank it amongst the most pernicious of writings, and brand it as one continued heap of fustian, scurrility, and falsehood." Brown himself does not agree with either of these extreme estimates. "The noble writer hath mingled beauties and blots, faults and excellencies, with a liberal and unsparing hand." One excellency of the *Characteristics* specially appeals to his admiration, namely, "that generous spirit of freedom which shines throughout the whole." "The noble author everywhere asserts the natural privilege of man, which hath been so often denied him, of seeing with his own eyes and judging by his own reason." On the two first Essays, as well as on parts of the Miscellaneous Reflections, he is naturally very severe, but, as regards the Soliloquy, "bating only a few accidental passages," he has, "little more to do than to approve and admire." In the main part of his task, the examination of the Inquiry concerning Virtue, Brown shows considerable acuteness, and a much

<sup>9</sup> Chalmers' *Biographical Dictionary*, Art. "Brown (John)."

clearer conception, than most writers of his time, of the real meaning of ethical problems. He is himself what we should now call an Utilitarian, insisting on the necessity of a definite criterion of actions, and placing that criterion in their tendency to promote or impair the general weal. Virtue, he maintains, "is no other than the conformity of our affections with the public good," or "the voluntary production of the greatest happiness." We have already seen<sup>1</sup> that Shaftesbury substantially adopts the same criterion of actions as Brown, though the fact that he does so is obscured by the metaphorical language which he employs in describing Virtue and Vice, as well as by the immediate character which he ascribes to the decisions of the Moral Sense. The theory of an immediate moral faculty and the adoption of a test, often requiring much time and pains in its application, are, undoubtedly, to a certain extent, inconsistent,<sup>2</sup> but I should myself rather find fault with his account of the "Moral Sense" than accuse him of having failed to discover any definite criterion of right and wrong. Brown's strictures, however, on the vague and metaphorical character of his language, and on the want of system in his speculations, are, it must be confessed, far from being without justification. On the ultimate origin of the distinction of Right and Wrong Brown says nothing, though I imagine he would have placed it in the Will of God. As respects the sanctions of virtuous conduct, he is not completely at issue with Shaftesbury, wide as their differences are. He grants that there are a few exceptional cases in which the purely moral sanction may be sufficient to ensure right action. "In minds of a gentle and generous disposition, where the sensual appetites are weak,

<sup>1</sup> See ch. iii., pp. 72-6.

<sup>2</sup> The extent to which they are inconsistent has already been discussed in ch. iii., pp. 90-94.

the imagination refined, and the benevolent affections naturally predominant; these very affections, and the moral sense arising from them, will in all the common occurrences of life secure the practice of virtue." The higher religious sanction,—the example of a Perfect Being, and the love and adoration inspired by Him,—which occupies so prominent a position in Shaftesbury's system, Brown regards as "not calculated for use," and "only existing in a mind taken up in vision." God, except possibly to a few, who are capable of the most exalted degrees of virtue, is simply the dispenser of rewards and punishments, which supplement the terrors of human law. The mass of mankind, in a large proportion of their actions, can only be deterred from vice by "the lively and active belief of an all-seeing and all-powerful God, who will hereafter make them happy or miserable, according as they designedly promote or violate the happiness of their fellow-creatures." This proposition is possibly true, but, when the writer goes on to say "And this is the Essence of Religion," one feels that, however orthodox he may be in his opinions, his religious feeling is on a lower level than that of the author of the *Moralists*. Brown's ethical theories, in respect both to the criterion and the sanctions of morality, are very similar to those of Paley, whose work on *Moral and Political Philosophy* was published in 1785. He would hardly, however, have gone to the length of defining Virtue as "the doing good to mankind, in obedience to the Will of God, and for the sake of everlasting happiness,"<sup>3</sup> a definition which implies that no act, not expressly done for the purpose of avoiding future punishment or securing future reward, can properly be called virtuous. There was a growing tendency among the divines of the eighteenth century, inspired probably by the fear of Deism, to suppose that any moral system which appealed, in the last resort, to

<sup>3</sup> Paley's *Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy*, Book I., ch. 7.

other sanctions than those of human law, the opinions of society, or future rewards and punishments, must necessarily be irreligious.

Brown's last Essay (*On Revealed Religion and Christianity*) contains some very hard hitting, and not unfrequently, I think, exaggerates Shaftesbury's hostility to Revealed Religion and the Doctrines of the Church. A special example of unfairness is, perhaps, to be found in the section (Sec. 2) where he tries to show that Shaftesbury did not believe in the sanction of future punishment, and attempted designedly to weaken its force, thereby "unhinging society to the utmost of his power." Shaftesbury's position on this subject was, of course, difficult to understand by men, like Berkeley and Brown, whose whole habit of thinking on ethical questions lay in the direction of theological utilitarianism, but still the extent to which they misunderstood him argues much want of care, I should not like to say want of candour, on their part. The severity of the rest of the Essay would probably have been tempered, had Brown, in addition to his strong reasoning powers, possessed any sense of humour. Shaftesbury's banter is mercilessly analyzed, and every sentence discussed is treated as if it formed part of a grave legal document. Moreover, no allowance is made for the varying moods of a man who seems to have been, by constitution, peculiarly fitful. In the interpretation of a writer of this kind, much greater stress ought always to be laid on the passages in which he is plainly in a serious vein, than on those in which he is indulging a turn for ridicule or badinage. At the same time, I do not deny that the stern reproofs dealt out to Shaftesbury by Brown and some of his other antagonists, for the unseemly manner in which he often handles sacred subjects, were, in many cases, richly deserved. These authors seem, however, frequently to have suspected de-

sign, where Shaftesbury was only following the bent of his temper.

Brown's book immediately provoked three replies. Two of these, *A Vindication of Lord Shaftesbury on the Subject of Ridicule*, and *A Vindication of Lord Shaftesbury on the Subjects of Morality and Religion*, were written by a Mr. Charles Bulkley, a dissenting minister. The authorship of the third, a smartly-written pamphlet, entitled *Animadversions on Mr. Brown's Three Essays on the Characteristics*, is, I believe, unknown.

Leland's *View of the Principal Deistical Writers*, which was published in 1754, contains a criticism of Shaftesbury. It gives the author "a real concern, that, among the writers who have appeared against revealed religion," he is "obliged to take notice of the noble author of the *Characteristics*," and he states that "some are not willing to allow that he is to be reckoned in the number." He proceeds, nevertheless, to repeat in a briefer form and in a milder tone the charges of endeavouring to undermine Christianity and of disparaging the supernatural sanctions of conduct which had recently been levelled against the *Characteristics* by Brown. He recognizes, however, Shaftesbury's "refined sentiments on the beauty and excellence of virtue," and acknowledges that he "hath often spoken honourably of a wise and good providence, which ministers and governs the whole in the best manner; and hath strongly asserted, in opposition to Mr. Hobbes, the natural differences between good and evil; and that man was originally formed for society and the exercise of mutual kindness and benevolence; and not only so, but for religion and piety too." In a supplement to his work, Leland included another letter on Shaftesbury, defending his first, but fully recognizing the exalted views of natural religion, and of the intimate connexion between the religious and moral feelings, which are to be found scattered up and down the *Characteristics*.

Of all the replies which were elicited by Shaftesbury's statements on the sanctions of a future life, the most temperate and effective is that of John Balguy, the friend of Hoadly and disciple of Clarke, who, in 1726, published a pamphlet entitled *A Letter to a Deist concerning the Beauty and Excellency of Moral Virtue, and the support and improvement which it receives from the Christian Revelation*. While admitting that the perfection of moral goodness consists in the love of Virtue for Virtue's sake, or, as he afterwards expressed it in a postscript, "in being influenced solely by a regard to rectitude and right reason, and the intrinsic fitness and amiableness of such actions as are conformable thereto," he maintains that the hope of reward and fear of punishment, especially in a future life, are indispensable as auxiliary motives to the great majority of mankind. "In short, the question is not, which motives are the purest and most sublime; but which are most useful, and most effectual, to prevail with degenerate man and accomplish his reformation." At the same time, he acknowledges that, *cæteris paribus*, the more disinterestedly any agent acts, the more virtuous he is.

Balguy's tract on *The Foundation of Moral Goodness*, containing an examination of Hutcheson's ethical system, will be considered more conveniently in a subsequent chapter. The systems of Shaftesbury and Hutcheson are there attacked, not from the side of Theological Utilitarianism, but from that of what has been called the Rational School of Moralists.

Shaftesbury had several imitators, whose works have now sunk into oblivion, and, besides the authors already named, there were, of course, many others, in the first half of the eighteenth century, who directly or incidentally criticized his opinions. The instances, however, which I have already given, are quite sufficient to show the character of the reception accorded to his works in his own country, and, if we take

in Balguy's criticism of Hutcheson, the nature of the objections urged against them. ♥

Of the judgments of Le Clerc, Leibnitz, and Voltaire, I have spoken in earlier portions of this chapter. The influence of Shaftesbury on the earlier phases of Diderot's ethical and theological opinions is notorious.<sup>4</sup> In 1745 Diderot adapted or reproduced the "Inquiry concerning Virtue" in what was afterwards known as his "*Essai sur le Mérite et la Vertu*." Though announced as a translation from Shaftesbury, this work represents the spirit rather than the words of the Inquiry. The author tells us that he seldom had recourse to the original during the composition of his book, but yet all its distinctive features are faithfully retained. Specially is this the case with the intimate connexion which Shaftesbury establishes between Virtue and Natural Religion, a connexion emphasised even still more by Diderot than by his English prototype. In the *Discours Préliminaire*, Diderot dwells specially on the religious character of Shaftesbury's philosophy, and protests warmly against confounding him with the Asgills, the Tindals, and the Tolands, "bad Protestants and miserable writers."

In 1769, a French translation of the whole of Shaftesbury's works, including the letters, was published at Geneva.

I must now say something of the popularity accorded to Shaftesbury's writings in Germany, during the latter part of the eighteenth and the earlier part of the nineteenth century. Translations of separate treatises into German began to be

<sup>4</sup> See Morley's Diderot, Vol i., pp. 41—48. Mr. Morley has some interesting remarks on the historical circumstances which directed Diderot's attention to Shaftesbury. He draws a parallel between the extravagances of the French Prophets in England at the beginning of the century, which occasioned Shaftesbury's Letter concerning Enthusiasm, and the subsequent outburst of fanaticism amongst the Jansenists in Paris.



made in 1738, and in 1776—1779 there appeared a complete German translation of the *Characteristics*.<sup>5</sup> Hermann Hettner<sup>6</sup> says that, not only Leibnitz, Voltaire, and Diderot, but Lessing, Mendelssohn, Wieland, and Herder drew the most stimulating nutriment from Shaftesbury. "His charms," he adds, "are ever fresh. A new-born Hellenism, a divine cultus of Beauty presented itself before his inspired soul." Herder is specially eulogistic. In the *Adrastea*,<sup>7</sup> he pronounces the Moralists to be a composition, in form well-nigh worthy of Grecian antiquity, and in its contents almost superior to it. It is perhaps the most beautiful Metaphysic which has ever been imagined. To any young man, who has a power of comprehending the noble and the beautiful, it must be a peculiarly rich source of inspiration. Without it, even with the assistance of Bolingbroke's papers, the best verses in Pope's *Essay on Man* would hardly have been written, and Thomson's Muse had the impassioned Theocles for its guide. In France, it was under the impulse communicated by Bacon and Shaftesbury that Diderot pursued his peculiar path. "This Virtuoso of Humanity," he says in another place,<sup>8</sup> "exercised a signal influence on the best heads of the eighteenth century, on men who honestly devoted themselves to the culture of the true, the beautiful, and the good." The interest felt by German literary men in Shaftesbury, which had pretty nearly died out in the middle of this century, has been recently revived by the publication of two excellent monographs, one dealing with him mainly from the theological side by Dr. Gideon Spicker, Freiburg i. B., 1872, the other dealing with him mainly from the philosophical side by Dr. Georg von Gizycki, Leipzig,

<sup>5</sup> Von Gizycki, *Die Philosophie Shaftesbury's*. Vorrede.

<sup>6</sup> *Literaturgeschichte des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts*, Erster Theil.

<sup>7</sup> *Adrastea*, I., 14, 1801. *Shaftesbury, Geist und Frohsinn*.

<sup>8</sup> *Briefe zu Beförderung der Humanität*, 1794. Brief 23.

1876. Both these works, and perhaps I may say specially the latter, present the German reader with a faithful and graphic portraiture of the English essayist and philosopher.<sup>9</sup>

By far the most important influence, if we look to permanent results, which Shaftesbury exercised on the development of subsequent speculation was in his character of a moralist. Religious scepticism, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, was in the air, and, at that period, it naturally took the form of Deism, that is to say, the rejection of a positive revelation combined with the belief in a personal God, a Providence, and, in some cases, a future state of rewards and punishments. Shaftesbury, if I may be allowed the expression, was a Deist of the right, and was fully as much occupied in presenting the positive as the negative parts of his doctrine. Moreover, the latter were rather insinuated than openly avowed. These circumstances, combined with the fact that he was an English peer, belonging to a family distinguished even in the English Peerage, doubtless procured for him readers, who would have scorned to pay any attention to the works of the coarser and more vulgar Deists. But, though Shaftesbury may have swelled the volume, he did not alter the direction, of the sceptical tendencies of the time. In one respect only can he be said to have exerted more than a passing influence on religious thought, and that is by the scheme of Optimism which he propounded simultaneously with Leibnitz, and which, mainly through the verses of Pope, coloured much of the religious sentiment of the eighteenth century.

<sup>9</sup> A recent monograph, "Einfluss der englischen Philosophen seit Bacon auf die deutsche Philosophie des 18 Jahrhunderts," by G. Zart, Berlin, 1881, gives much detailed information on the relation of Shaftesbury and Hutcheson to the history of German Philosophy in the eighteenth century.

Shaftesbury's influence on the subsequent history of Moral Philosophy was exercised at least as much indirectly through Hutcheson as directly through his own writings. Hence I must distribute what I have to say on this head between the present chapter and the chapter with which I shall conclude this volume. It appears to me that, in reference to subsequent speculation, the points which it is most important to notice in Shaftesbury's ethical theory are four—namely, his adoption of a tendency to promote the general welfare as the criterion of action, his conception of Virtue as consisting mainly in the exercise of the benevolent affections, the reference of moral distinctions to grounds independent of theology, and the theory of a moral sense, pronouncing immediately on the character of actions. (1)  
(2)  
(3)  
(4)

The first of these doctrines lies more on the surface in Cumberland than it does even in Shaftesbury, and it seems to be implied in the ethical speculations of Bacon.<sup>1</sup> In Hutcheson it becomes, as we shall see, sufficiently prominent to be expressed in a formula; with Hume it is the main doctrine of ethics; and in Bentham, under the name of the Greatest Happiness principle, it excludes almost entirely all the other questions of Moral Philosophy. (1)

That Virtue consists mainly in the exercise of the Benevolent Affections is a proposition which is implicitly recognized by many of the earlier of the modern writers on ethics. Passages to this effect might easily be discovered in Bacon, Grotius, Puffendorf, Cumberland, and what are called the Cambridge Platonists; and Leibnitz, as we have seen,<sup>2</sup> declared his own system to be, on this point, in harmony with that of Shaftesbury. It seems indeed to follow naturally from the Christian teaching that "love is the fulfilling of the (2)

<sup>1</sup> See my "Bacon," in this series, pp. 169—174.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 138.

law," and Hobbes' attempt to build up a system of morality resting solely on the selfish feelings was, when first started, almost universally regarded as a paradox. The peculiarity of Shaftesbury and Hutcheson is not so much that they emphasized the importance of the benevolent affections as that their teaching seem to throw into the shade the self-regarding and prudential virtues, which are so essential to the happiness of the individual and the material well-being of society. By Hume and Adam Smith the balance was restored, and, while the supreme excellence of the sympathetic feelings was fully recognized, the various forms of self-regard and self-respect were shown, when properly directed and kept within proper bounds, to merit the approbation of mankind at large.<sup>3</sup> Notwithstanding their exaggerations, however, Shaftesbury and Hutcheson may be considered as having permanently affected for good the course of moral speculation in England by diverting it from the sordid channels in which it was beginning to run, and by insisting, if even too strongly, on the fact that it is in the generous, sympathetic, and benevolent side of human nature that we must seek for the source of the most useful as well as the noblest virtues.

3) One of the main objections taken to Shaftesbury's ethical system by the critics of his own and the next generation was that he traced the origin of moral distinctions to the make and

<sup>3</sup> Compare, for instance, the two following passages in Hume's *Inquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*. "The epithets sociable, good-natured, humane, merciful, grateful, friendly, generous, beneficent, or their equivalents, are known in all languages, and universally express the highest merit which human nature is capable of attaining."—Section II., Part 1. "Temperance, sobriety, patience, constancy, perseverance, forethought, considerateness, secrecy, order, insinuation, address, presence of mind, quickness of conception, facility of expression: these, and a thousand more of the same kind, no man will ever deny to be excellencies and perfections"—Section VI., Part 1.

constitution of human nature rather than to the arbitrary will of God. What was then thought a defect would now be almost universally regarded as an excellency. Indeed, if right and wrong are simply constituted by the arbitrary fiat of the Supreme Being, it is difficult to see why morals should be treated as an independent science, and not merely as a subordinate branch of theology. And yet the view against which Shaftesbury protests had recently received the sanction of Locke, and was probably at this time the one generally accepted in Protestant countries,<sup>4</sup> not only amongst the vulgar but even in cultivated and reflective circles. Grotius and Hobbes, Cudworth and Clarke, had already assumed a bolder ground, and endeavoured to constitute Ethics as a separate science, though the work of Cudworth on *Eternal and Immutable Morality*, in which the popular view is so conclusively refuted, had not yet been published. Butler lent the great weight of his authority to the same side,<sup>5</sup> and, though the opposite opinion long maintained its ground, especially among what may be called the theological utilitarians, it, in its turn, has now come to be looked upon as exceptional, if not untenable. When it is said that Shaftesbury treated Morals independently of Theology, it must be remembered, however, that he fully recognized the reality of theological sanctions, and especially of the higher theological sanction, which consists in the love and veneration of a Being who is Himself ideally good. But the character of the sanctions by which morality is imposed and the ultimate grounds of moral distinctions are, as I have already shown, distinct questions.

<sup>4</sup> That this is not the doctrine of the Catholic Church is argued with great force by Mr. W. G. Ward, in his "*Nature and Grace*," Book I. Ch. 1, Sects. 3, 4.

<sup>5</sup> See a note in Butler's *Analogy*, Part I., Ch. 6. The same view is implied throughout the Sermons.

In the expression "Moral Sense," Shaftesbury contributed a new phrase to the English language. Though used sparingly by him, it was employed by Hutcheson almost invariably, whenever he had occasion to speak of the moral faculty, and thus it gradually found its way into ordinary writings and conversation.<sup>6</sup> Coalescing with what had long been taught by divines on the absolute and semi-mystical attributes of conscience,<sup>7</sup> the metaphor implied in this term unfortunately tended to obscure the fact that our moral judgments often require to be preceded by long and careful processes of ratiocination. Thus the idea gained ground, and seemed to receive a philosophical sanction, that a man can at once and without reflection determine on the right course of action for himself, or pronounce a valid opinion on the moral character of the acts of himself or others. Hume,<sup>8</sup> by his more careful analysis of the process of moral approbation, did much to dissipate this error among those who made a special study of ethical questions, but it still held its place, and to some extent, notwithstanding the rude assaults of Paley and Bentham, even now holds its place, in vulgar opinion. The language of Butler, however, on this subject is still more unguarded than that of Shaftesbury and Hutcheson, and, being also the most widely-read writer of the three, I think it is to him more than to any other philosophical moralist that we must ascribe the encouragement which men have received from their ethical guides to form hasty decisions and

<sup>6</sup> Adam Smith, in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), says that "the word moral sense cannot yet be considered as making part of the English tongue."

<sup>7</sup> For an excellent protest against the exaggerated and mischievous language often used on this subject, see two Sermons by Dr. South, on "The Nature and Measures of Conscience."

<sup>8</sup> See *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*, Section I., and Appendix I.

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express hasty judgments on matters of moral conduct. How far Butler's account of "Conscience" is simply an attempt to throw into philosophical language the traditional teaching of theologians, and how far it was suggested by Shaftesbury's theory of the "Moral Sense," is not easy to determine. That both influences are represented in his Sermons, there can be little doubt. In concluding this chapter, I need only remind the reader that the position of Shaftesbury, and of what has been called the "Moral-Sense school," on this point, has been already ascertained and criticized in my third chapter. It is not necessary that I should here pursue the subject any further, especially as it will come before us again in the account of Hutcheson.





# HUTCHESON.

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## CHAPTER I.

### LIFE AND WORKS.

FRANCIS HUTCHESON was born on the 8th of August, 1694. His father, John Hutcheson, was Presbyterian Minister of Armagh, and lived at Ballyrea, near that city. His grandfather, Alexander Hutcheson, was also a Presbyterian Minister, his charge being Saintfield in the county of Down. At Drumalig, a township in the parish of Saintfield, his grandfather's residence, Francis Hutcheson was probably born.<sup>1</sup> The grandfather had come over from Scotland, being, as Dr. Leechman tells us, "of an ancient and respectable family in the shire of Ayr in that kingdom." Thus the family of Hutchesons, like so many other families in the North of Ireland, was of Scottish descent.

Francis, who seems to have been distinguished, as a child, for the sweetness of his disposition and his capacity for learning, was a great favourite with his grandfather. It is said

<sup>1</sup> I am indebted for information as to the place of Hutcheson's birth, as well as for some particulars regarding his family and early history, to the Rev. George Hill, late Librarian of Queen's College, Belfast, who has kindly sent me various extracts from the *Belfast Monthly Magazine* of August, 1813.

that, at a later period, when his grandfather wished to alter a prior settlement of his property in the young man's favour, he peremptorily refused, though many arguments were used by his relations to prevail with him to accept the advantage. He and his brother Hans lived mostly with their father in Ballyrea till the year 1702, when they were sent to reside permanently with their grandfather, for the benefit of their education. According to the *Belfast Magazine*, the best classical school in the neighbourhood was one kept by a Mr. Hamilton in the old Meeting-house of Saintfield. Here the two brothers remained, till Francis, at least, was moved to an Academy (where situated Dr. Leechman, who is here our informant, does not tell us) to begin his course of Philosophy. He was "there taught the ordinary Scholastic Philosophy which was in vogue in those days, and applied himself to it with uncommon assiduity and diligence." In the year 1710, at the age of sixteen, he entered the university of Glasgow, where he spent the next six years of his life, at first in the study of philosophy, classics, and general literature, and afterwards in the study of theology. It was while here that he read Dr. Samuel Clarke's book on the Being and Attributes of God, which had been first published a few years before. The *à priori* arguments employed in this work did not give him entire satisfaction, and, about the time he was leaving the University, he wrote a letter to Dr. Clarke, urging his objections and desiring further explanations. Whether he received any answer, we are told, does not appear from his papers; and from this fact we may almost certainly infer that he did not. Dr. Clarke, who had then the highest reputation of any man in England as a metaphysical theologian, was probably paying the penalty of eminence by being exposed to an inconvenient number of queries and objections from various philosophical and theological students. Bishop Butler, who was at that

time a student at a dissenting academy at Tewkesbury, he had goodnaturedly answered in the years 1713 and 1714, and the correspondence was published in 1716, under the title of *Several letters to Dr. Clarke from a gentleman in Gloucestershire, with the Doctor's answers thereunto*. A few years before, in 1710, he had been less courteous to Berkeley, and declined altogether to enter into any correspondence with him on his new theory of Matter.<sup>2</sup> Hutcheson always remained doubtful, his biographer tells us, of the expediency of presenting to the bulk of mankind metaphysical arguments for the purpose of demonstrating the existence, unity, and perfections of the Deity, nor was he himself convinced of their soundness. Accordingly, in his own work on metaphysics, when he comes to the question of the existence of a God, we find him, like Shaftesbury, resting the proof almost entirely on the indications of a Deity afforded by the constitution of the Universe.

On quitting the university, Hutcheson returned to the north of Ireland, received a licence to preach, and was just on the point of settling down as the minister of a small presbyterian congregation, when it was suggested to him by some gentlemen living in the neighbourhood of Dublin to start a private academy in that city. In this occupation he seems to have been eminently successful. At Dublin his literary accomplishments soon made him generally known, and he appears to have rapidly formed the acquaintance of the more notable persons, lay and ecclesiastical, who then resided in the metropolis of Ireland. Among these are specially to be noted Lord Molesworth, already known to the reader as the friend

<sup>2</sup> See Fraser's *Berkeley* in Blackwood's Series of *Philosophical Classics*, Pt. I., ch. 5. The correspondence between Berkeley and Sir John Percival, from which I have derived the information given in the text, has been recently brought to light by Professor Fraser, and is an important contribution to Berkeley's biography.

and correspondent of Shaftesbury, who assisted him with advice and criticism in his æsthetic and philosophical inquiries, and Archbishop King, author of the well-known work *De Origine Mali*, who, to his great honour, steadily resisted all attempts to prosecute Hutcheson in the archbishop's court for keeping a school without having previously subscribed to the ecclesiastical canons and obtained the episcopal licence. When the two first Essays were published, Lord Carteret, afterwards Lord Granville, was Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. He was so struck with their merits that he took pains to find out the author, and afterwards invariably treated him with the most distinguishing marks of familiarity and esteem. Another friend was Dr. Synge, afterwards Bishop of Elphin, who assisted him to revise his papers. Hutcheson's relations with the clergy of the Established Church, especially with the archbishops of Armagh and Dublin, Boulter and King, seem to have been of the most cordial description; and "the inclination of his friends to serve him, the schemes proposed to him for obtaining promotion," &c., of which his biographer speaks, probably refer to some offers of preferment, on condition of his accepting episcopal ordination. These offers, however, of whatever nature they might be, were unavailing; "neither the love of riches nor of the elegance and grandeur of human life prevailed so far in his breast as to make him offer the least violence to his inward sentiments."

While residing in Dublin, Hutcheson published anonymously the four essays by which he still remains best known, namely, the *Inquiry concerning Beauty, Order, Harmony, Design*, and the *Inquiry concerning Moral Good and Evil*, in 1725, and the *Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections*, and *Illustrations upon the Moral Sense*, in 1728. The original title of the former work (which reached a second edition in the next year) was—*An Inquiry into the Original*

of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue in two Treatises, in which the Principles of the late Earl of Shaftesbury are explained and defended against the Author of the Fable of the Bees; and the Ideas of Moral Good and Evil are established, according to the Sentiments of the Ancient Moralists, with an attempt to introduce a Mathematical Calculation on subjects of Morality. The alterations and additions made in the second edition of these Essays were published in a separate form in 1726. To the period of his Dublin residence are also to be referred the "Thoughts on Laughter" (a criticism of Hobbes) and the "Observations on the Fable of the Bees," being in all six letters contributed to *Hibernicus' Letters*, a periodical which appeared in Dublin, 1725-27 (2d ed., 1734). At the end of the same period occurred the controversy in the columns of the *London Journal* with Mr. Gilbert Burnet (probably the second son of Dr. Gilbert Burnet, bishop of Salisbury), on the "True Foundation of Virtue or Moral Goodness." All these letters were collected in one volume, and published by Foulis, Glasgow, 1772.

Of the admirable little treatise on Laughter, as I shall have no opportunity of recurring to it, I shall here offer a brief account. Hobbes had maintained that Laughter, like all other emotions, has its roots in selfishness. "Sudden glory is the passion which maketh those grimaces called Laughter; and it is caused either by some sudden act of their own, that pleaseth them, or by the apprehension of some deformed thing in another, by comparison whereof they suddenly applaud themselves. And it is incident most to those that are conscious of the fewest abilities in themselves; who are forced to keep themselves in their own favour by observing the imperfections of other men." <sup>3</sup> "If," says Hutcheson,

<sup>3</sup> *Leviathan*, Pt. I. ch. 6. *Of Human Nature*, ch. 9. "The passion of laughter is nothing else but sudden glory arising from some sudden

“Mr. Hobbes’ opinion be just,” then, first, “there can be no laughter on any occasion where we notice no comparison of ourselves to others, or of our present state to a worse state, or where we do not observe some superiority of ourselves above some other thing; and, again, it must follow that every sudden appearance of superiority over another must excite laughter, when we attend to it.” He then proceeds, by a number of examples, to show that both these consequences, and, therefore, the supposition on which they are based, are false. Thus, in the case of parody and burlesque allusion, which so frequently occasion laughter, there is often the highest feeling of veneration for the words or acts parodied or alluded to. Humorous applications of texts of Scripture are often quite as much enjoyed by orthodox and pious people as by unbelievers. As regards the second consequence, if it be true, “it must be a very merry state in which a fine gentleman is, when well dressed, in his coach, he passes our streets, where he will see so many ragged beggars, and porters and chairmen sweating at their labour, on every side of him. It is a great pity that we had not an infirmary or lazaret-house to retire to in cloudy weather, to get an afternoon of laughter at these inferior objects.” Hobbes might have replied to this latter argument by saying that the sense of the ludicrous is, in this instance, overpowered by what is at the moment a much stronger feeling, the feeling of pity. There can be no question, however, that Hutcheson is right in his main contention, and that the reflection on our own superiority, whether to others or to our past selves, is by no means an invariable, or even a very frequent, accompaniment of laughter.

conception of some eminency in ourselves, by comparison with the infirmity of others or with our own formerly; for men laugh at the follies of themselves past, when they come suddenly to remembrance, except they bring with them any present dishonour.”

Hutcheson's own theory is that laughter arises on the observation of contrast. "That then which seems generally the cause of laughter is the bringing together of images which have contrary additional ideas, as well as some resemblance in the principal idea; this contrast between ideas of grandeur, dignity, sanctity, perfection, and ideas of meanness, baseness, profanity, seems to be the very spirit of burlesque, and the greatest part of our raillery and jest are founded upon it. We find ourselves also moved to laughter by an overstraining of wit, by bringing resemblances from subjects of a quite different kind from the subject to which they are compared. When we see, instead of the easiness and natural resemblance which constitutes true wit, a forced straining of a likeness, our laughter is apt to arise; as also, when the only resemblance is not in the idea but in the sound of the words. And this is the matter of laughter in the pun."

Setting aside purely physical causes of laughter, such as tickling and hysteria, and also the spontaneous laughter, which is one of the outlets of over-excited emotion, as, for instance, of sudden joy or of exuberant animal spirits, it may be maintained that the perception of contrast, in some form or other, is an invariable condition of laughter. As Mr. Bain<sup>4</sup> has pointed out, there are, however, many kinds of contrast or incongruity which do not excite laughter; such, for instance, as a decrepit man under a heavy burden, an instrument out of tune, a corpse at a banquet, a falsehood, parental cruelty, filial ingratitude. What, then, are the kinds of incongruity which provoke laughter? I should be inclined to arrange them under two heads: the ludicrous, properly so called, and the mere frustration of expectation or, in other words, the occurrence of the unexpected. Mr. Bain maintains that

<sup>4</sup> Bain on *The Emotions and the Will*. The Emotions, ch. 14.

“the occasion of the Ludicrous is the degradation of some person or interest possessing dignity, in circumstances that excite no other strong emotion.” And Mr. Herbert Spencer, in his very interesting article on the Physiology of Laughter (*Macmillan's Magazine*, March 1860; reprinted in *Essays*, vol. i.), says, “Laughter naturally results only when consciousness is unawares transferred from great things to small—only when there is what we may call a *descending* incongruity.” While admitting these as adequate accounts of the sentiment which we strictly designate as a sense of the ludicrous, it seems to me that the contrast involved in mere surprise, or, as I have called it, the frustration of expectation or the occurrence of the unexpected, is often an occasion of laughter. Thus we often laugh, when an unexpected turn is given to a word or sentence, even though it suffers no degradation in the change. And sometimes, when a player is suddenly and expectedly beaten in a game of chance, or even when there is an extraordinary run of luck, the bystanders will burst into uproarious merriment, directed not so much at the discomfiture of the loser as at the strangeness of the event. Again, we all know how children laugh at the game of “hide and seek,” and how even grown-up people will laugh, when they discover that they have been “playing,” as the phrase goes, “at cross-purposes.” Of course, the surprise must never be such as to evoke disagreeable feelings, but it appears to me that, when this is not the case, the mere surprise occasioned by a striking contrast, without any descent from great things to small, is, in many temperaments, quite sufficient to elicit laughter.

The use of Ridicule is stated by Hutcheson with great felicity. “When any object, either good or evil, is aggravated and increased by the violence of our passions, or an enthusiastic admiration, or fear, the application of ridicule is



the readiest way to bring down our high imaginations to a conformity with the real moment or importance of the affair. Ridicule gives our minds, as it were, a bend to the contrary side; so that, upon reflection, they may be more capable of settling in a just conformity with nature."

The main motive of the letters on Laughter is to show the insufficiency of Hobbes' ethical theory to account for the obvious facts of human nature.

In 1729 Hutcheson was elected, without any solicitation, we are told, on his part, as the successor of his old master, Gerschom Carmichael, to the chair of moral philosophy in the University of Glasgow. It is curious that up to this time both his essays and letters had all been published anonymously, though their authorship appears to have been perfectly well known. In 1730 he entered on the duties of his office, delivering an inaugural lecture (afterwards published), *De Naturali Hominum Socialitate*. The prospect of being delivered from the miscellaneous drudgery of school work, and of securing increased leisure for the pursuit of his favourite studies, occasions an almost boisterous outburst of joy:—"laboriosissimis, mihi, atque molestissimis negotiis implicito, exigua admodum erant ad bonas literas aut mentem colendam otia; non levi igitur lætitia commovebar cum almam matrem Academiam me, suum olim alumnum, in libertatem asseruisse audiveram." And yet the works on which Hutcheson's reputation was to rest had already been published.

The rest of Hutcheson's life was mainly spent in the assiduous performance of the duties of his professorship, including, of course, the preparation of lectures for his classes. Five days a week he lectured on Natural Religion, Morals, Jurisprudence, and Government. Three days a week he lectured on the Greek and Latin Moralists. On Sunday evenings he lectured on the evidences and distinctive tenets

of Christianity, "taking his views of its doctrines," we are told, "from the original records of the New Testament, and not from the party-tenets or scholastic systems of modern ages." This was the most crowded of his lectures, being attended by students indifferently from every faculty. His reputation as a teacher attracted many young men, belonging to dissenting families, from England and Ireland, and he appears to have enjoyed a well-deserved popularity among both his pupils and his colleagues. One of his pupils, it may be mentioned, was Adam Smith, who subsequently occupied the same chair. As a lecturer, Hutcheson had a persuasive manner, and drew from a fund of natural eloquence, which, together with his stores of knowledge, rendered him one of the most masterly and engaging teachers of his generation.<sup>5</sup> Though the subjects of his lectures were, in the main, the same every season, students would often attend them for four, five, or six years together. Then he had that indispensable qualification of a successful teacher, that intercourse with young men was a delight rather than a trouble to him. In conversation, he displayed great skill, and discovered such a readiness of thought, clearness of expression, and extent of knowledge, on almost every subject that could be started, as

<sup>5</sup> Dugald Stewart, in his *Account of the Life and Writings of Adam Smith*, says that Hutcheson's talents, as a public speaker, must have been of a far higher order than those which he displayed as a writer; "all his pupils whom I have happened to meet with (some of them, certainly, very competent judges) having agreed exactly with each other in their accounts of the extraordinary impression which they made on the minds of his hearers." After expressing his decided preference for the *Essays* over the posthumous work, Stewart adds: "His great and deserved fame, however, rests now chiefly on the traditionary history of his academical lectures, which appear to have contributed very powerfully to diffuse, in Scotland, that taste for analytical discussion, and that spirit of liberal inquiry, to which the world is indebted for some of the most valuable productions of the eighteenth century."

gave delight to all who heard him. "A remarkable vivacity of thought and expression, a perpetual flow of cheerfulness and good-will, and a visible air of inward happiness, made him the life and genius of society, and spread an enlivening influence everywhere around him. He was gay and pleasant, full of mirth and raillery, familiar and communicative to the last degree, and utterly free from all stateliness or affectation." To the poorer students he was always open-handed, assisting them with money or opening his lectures to them without fees. Though somewhat quick-tempered, he was remarkable for his warm feelings and generous impulses. "He was all benevolence and affection," says Dr. Leechman; "none who saw him could doubt of it; his air and countenance bespoke it. It was to such a degree his prevailing temper that it gave a tincture to his writings, which were perhaps as much dictated by his heart as his head; and if there was any need of an apology for the stress that in his scheme seems to be laid upon the friendly and public affections, the prevalence of them in his own temper would at least form an amiable one."

Hutcheson's studies appear to have ranged over a wide field. They included, besides the subjects peculiar to his chair, the Latin and Greek Classics, Hebrew, Theology, Natural Philosophy and Mathematics, Civil and Ecclesiastical History, the history of the arts and sciences. The study of Greek, which had fallen into great neglect, was revived in Glasgow mainly through his influence. In those days, when the accumulation of books on any one subject was comparatively small, and simpler social habits left to studious men more leisure than they are now usually fortunate enough to obtain, this union of excellence in a variety of subjects was by no means rare. The cases of Descartes, Leibnitz, and Newton will at once occur to the reader as striking illustrations of this fact.

The disinterestedness which Hutcheson displayed in all that concerned his own fortunes is shown by his declining an offer of the Professorship of Moral Philosophy at Edinburgh. Not only was this a more lucrative appointment than the one which he held, but he would have had the advantages which attend residence in a capital and the opportunity of entering a much more distinguished circle of acquaintances than was open to him in Glasgow. He was content, however, with his position and surroundings, and remained where he was, in the quiet discharge of his duties, till his death in 1746. When he died, Hutcheson was in his fifty-third year. He had hitherto, with the exception of occasional attacks of gout, enjoyed excellent health, but was carried off prematurely by a fever. Soon after his settlement in Dublin, he married a Miss Wilson, daughter of a gentleman of fortune and position. He left one son, Dr. Francis Hutcheson, who followed the medical profession. "If any one," says his biographer, "should wish to know anything about Dr. Hutcheson's external form, it may be said it was an image of his mind. A stature above middle size, a gesture and manner negligent and easy, but decent and manly, gave a dignity to his appearance. His complexion was fair and sanguine, and his features regular. His countenance and look bespoke sense, spirit, kindness, and joy of heart. His whole person and manner raised a strong prejudice in his favour at first sight." Notwithstanding, however, all these advantages of person, disposition, address, and acquirements, he was not without his detractors. Theological party-spirit, at that time, ran high in Scotland, and the known liberality of his religious views, and his zeal for civil and religious freedom, caused him to be looked upon with a certain amount of suspicion and disfavour. It is implied by his biographer that he made no attempt to disarm hostility, either by any reserve in communicating his

opinions or by studying moderation in the expression of them; in other words, that he had the courage of his convictions.

In addition to the works already named, the following were published during Hutcheson's lifetime:—a pamphlet entitled *Considerations on Patronages, addressed to the Gentlemen of Scotland*, 1735; *Philosophiæ Moralis Institutio Compendiaria, Ethices et Jurisprudentiæ Naturalis Elementa continens*, Lib. III., Glasgow, Foulis, 1742; *Metaphysicæ Synopsis Ontologiam et Pneumatologiam complectens*, Glasgow, Foulis, 1742. The last work was published anonymously. The pamphlet on *Patronages* is directed against the patronages vested in the Crown and private patrons, as restored by the Act of 1711, and advocates the restitution of ecclesiastical appointments to the heritors and elders, on the ground that they represent the feelings and opinions of the more influential parishioners.

After his death, his son, Francis Hutcheson, M.D., published in two volumes, quarto, what is much the longest, though by no means the most interesting, of his works, *A System of Moral Philosophy, in Three Books*, London, 1755. To this is prefixed a life of the author, by Dr. William Leechman, professor of divinity in the university of Glasgow. The only remaining work that we are able to assign to Hutcheson is a small treatise on *Logic*, which, according to his biographer, was "not designed for the public eye," but which was published by Foulis at Glasgow in 1764. This compendium, together with the *Compendium of Metaphysics*, was republished at Strasburg in 1772.

Of all these writings, however, those alone on which Hutcheson's philosophical reputation rests are the four essays, and perhaps the letters, all published during his residence in Dublin. To the more distinctive features of his philosophical system, so far as they may be gathered from these and his

other works, I shall proceed to draw attention in the two next chapters.

The original editions of Hutcheson's various works have been already mentioned. Several additions and alterations were made in the second edition (1726) of the *Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*. This, as well as most of his other works, passed through various editions. Of the *System of Moral Philosophy*, however, published after Hutcheson's death, there is, I believe, one edition only. Notices of Hutcheson occur in most histories, both of philosophy generally and of moral philosophy in particular, as, for instance, in part vii. of Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*; Mackintosh's *Progress of Ethical Philosophy*; Cousin, *Cours d'Histoire de la Philosophie Morale du XVIIIème Siècle*; Whewell's *Lectures on the History of Moral Philosophy in England*; Bain's *Mental and Moral Science*; Dr. Noah Porter's Appendix to the English translation of Ueberweg's *History of Philosophy*; Mr. Leslie Stephen's *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, &c. Of Dr. Leechman's *Biography of Hutcheson* I have already spoken. Professor Veitch gives an interesting account of his professorial work in Glasgow, *Mind*, Vol. ii. pp. 209—211.

## CHAPTER II.

## HUTCHESON'S ETHICAL THEORY.

IN the publication of the first two essays, Hutcheson acted quite rightly in connecting his name on the title-page with that of Shaftesbury. There are no two names, perhaps, in the history of English moral philosophy, which stand in a closer connexion. The analogy drawn between beauty and virtue, the functions assigned to the moral sense, the position that the benevolent feelings form an original and irreducible part of our nature, and the unhesitating adoption of the principle that the test of virtuous action is its tendency to promote the general welfare, or good of the whole, are at once obvious and fundamental points of agreement between the two authors.

According to Hutcheson, man has a variety of senses, internal as well as external, reflex as well as direct, the general definition of a sense being "any determination of our minds to receive ideas independently on our will, and to have perceptions of pleasure and pain."<sup>1</sup> He does not attempt to give an exhaustive enumeration of these "senses," but, in various parts of his works, he specifies, besides the five external senses commonly recognized (which, he rightly hints, might be added to)<sup>2</sup>—(1) consciousness, by which each man has a

<sup>1</sup> Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions, Sect. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Hutcheson here anticipates a great improvement in the classifications of psychology. To the "Five Senses," commonly so called, recent psy-

perception of himself and of all that is going on in his own mind ;<sup>3</sup> (2) the sense of beauty ; (3) a public sense, or *sensus communis*, “ a determination to be pleased with the happiness of others and to be uneasy at their misery ;” (4) the moral sense, or “ moral sense of beauty in actions and affections, by which we perceive virtue or vice, in ourselves or others ;” (5) a sense of honour, or praise and blame, “ which makes the approbation or gratitude of others the necessary occasion of pleasure, and their dislike, condemnation, or resentment of injuries done by us the occasion of that uneasy sensation called shame ;” (6) a sense of the ridiculous. It is plain, as the author confesses, that there may be “ other perceptions, distinct from all these classes,” and, in fact, there seems to be no limit to the number of “ senses ” in which a psychological division of this kind might result. Thus, he makes veracity the object of a special sense. “ In this important matter, we have very manifest indications of what God requires of us, in

chologists add various other physical or corporeal senses, by the action of which a great part of our conscious life is built up. By Mr. Lewes (*Problems of Life and Mind*, Vol. i., p. 132) these are called the “ Systemic Senses, because distributed through the system at large, instead of being localized in eye, ear, tongue, &c.,” and are classified as the Nutritive, Respiratory, Generative, and Muscular Senses. As examples of the first, he gives the feelings accompanying secretion, excretion, hunger, thirst, &c. “ The feelings of suffocation, oppression, lightness, &c., belong to the second. The sexual and maternal feelings belong to the third ; while those of the fourth enter as elements into all the others.” The recognition of this last class, the Muscular Feelings, whose characteristic is the consciousness of energy promoted or impaired, at once introduces a wide difference between the old psychology and the new, and vastly adds to the material at our disposal for the construction of a rational account of the development of our cognitive and sentient nature.

<sup>3</sup> “ *Sensus quidam internus, aut conscientia, cujus ope nota sunt ea omnia, quæ in mente geruntur ; hac animi vi se novit quisque, suique sensum habet,*” *Metaph. Syn.*, pars i. cap. 2. This “ sense ” is regarded as a direct internal sense.



the very structure of our nature ; an immediate sense seems to recommend that use of speech which the common interest requires. In our tender years we are naturally prone to discover candidly all we know. We have a natural aversion to all falsehood and dissimulation, until we experience some inconveniency from this openness of heart, which we at first approve."<sup>4</sup>

Of these "senses" that which plays the most important part in Hutcheson's ethical system is the "moral sense." It is this which pronounces immediately on the character of actions and affections, approving of those which are virtuous, and disapproving of those which are vicious. "This moral sense from its very nature appears to be designed for regulating and controlling all our powers. This dignity and commanding nature we are immediately conscious of, as we are conscious of the power itself. Nor can such matters of immediate feeling be otherways proved but by appeals to our hearts."<sup>5</sup> "His principal design," he says in the preface to the two first treatises, "is to show that human nature was not left quite indifferent in the affair of virtue, to form to itself observations concerning the advantage or disadvantage of actions, and accordingly to regulate its conduct. The weakness of our reason, and the avocations arising from the infirmity and necessities of our nature are so great that very few men could ever have formed those long deductions of reason, which show some actions to be in the whole advantageous to the agent, and their contraries pernicious. The Author of nature has much better furnished us for a virtuous conduct than our moralists seem to imagine, by almost as quick and powerful instructions as we have for the preservation

<sup>4</sup> *Philosophiæ Moralis Institutio Compendiaria*. Lib. II., cap. 10, § 1.

<sup>5</sup> *System of Moral Philosophy*, Book I., ch. 4. These are almost the exact words employed by Butler, when speaking of conscience. See Preface to the Sermons, and Sermons II., III.

of our bodies. He has made virtue a lovely form, to excite our pursuit of it, and has given us strong affections to be the springs of each virtuous action." Passing over the appeal to final causes involved in this and similar passages, as well as the assumption that the "moral sense" has had no growth or history, but was "implanted" in man exactly in the condition in which it is now to be found among the more civilized races, an assumption common to the systems of both Hutcheson and Butler, it may be remarked that the employment of the term "sense" to designate the approving or disapproving faculty has a tendency to obscure the real nature of the process which goes on in an act of moral approbation or disapprobation. For, as is so clearly established by Hume,<sup>6</sup> this act really consists of two parts:—one an act of deliberation, more or less prolonged, resulting in an intellectual judgment; the other a reflex feeling, probably instantaneous, of either satisfaction or repugnance—of satisfaction at actions of a certain class which we denominate as good or virtuous, of dissatisfaction or repugnance at actions of another class which we denominate as bad or vicious. By the intellectual part of this process we refer the action or habit to a certain class, and invest it with certain characteristics; but no sooner is the intellectual process completed than there is excited in us a feeling similar to that which myriads of actions and habits of the same class, or deemed to be of the same class, have excited in us on former occasions. Now, supposing the latter part of this process to be instantaneous, uniform, and exempt from error, the former certainly is not. All mankind may, apart from their selfish interests, approve of that which is virtuous or makes for the general good, but surely they entertain the most widely divergent opinions, and, if left to their own judgment, would

<sup>6</sup> See the passages referred to on pp. 225-7. Cp. Brown's *Lectures on the Philosophy of the Human Mind*, Lecture lxxxii

frequently arrive at directly opposite conclusions as to the nature of the particular actions and habits which fall under this class. This distinction is undoubtedly recognized by Hutcheson, as it could hardly fail to be, in his analysis of the mental process preceding moral action, nor does he invariably ignore it, even when treating of the moral approbation or disapprobation which is subsequent on action. Witness the following passages:—"Men have reason given them, to judge of the tendencies of their actions, that they may not stupidly follow the first appearance of public good; but it is still some appearance of good which they pursue."<sup>7</sup> "All exciting reasons presuppose instincts and affections; and the justifying presuppose a moral sense."<sup>8</sup> "When we say one is obliged to an action, we either mean—(1) that the action is necessary to obtain happiness to the agent, or to avoid misery; or (2) that every spectator, or he himself upon reflection, must approve his action, and disapprove his omitting it, if he considers fully all its circumstances. The former meaning of the word obligation presupposes selfish affections, and the senses of private happiness; the latter meaning includes the moral sense."<sup>9</sup> Notwithstanding these passages, however, it remains true that Hutcheson, both by the phrases which he employs to designate the moral faculty, and by the language in which he ordinarily describes the process of moral approbation, has done much to favour that loose and popular view of morality which, ignoring the difficulties that often attend our moral decisions, and the necessity of deliberation and reflection, encourages hasty resolves and impulsive judgments. The term "moral sense" (which, it will be remembered, had already been employed by Shaftesbury), if in-

<sup>7</sup> Inquiry concerning Moral Good and Evil, Sect. 4.

<sup>8</sup> Illustrations on the Moral Sense, Sect. 1.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

variably coupled with the term "moral judgment," would be open to little objection; but, taken alone, as designating the complex process of moral approbation, it is liable to lead not only to serious misapprehension, but to grave practical errors. For, if each man's decisions are solely the result of an immediate intuition of the moral sense, why be at any pains to test, correct, or review them? Or why educate a faculty whose decisions are infallible? The expression has, in fact, the fault of most metaphorical terms; it leads to an exaggeration of the truth which it is intended to suggest.

But, though Hutcheson usually describes the moral faculty as acting instinctively and immediately, he does not, like Butler, confound the moral faculty with the moral standard. The test or criterion of right action is with Hutcheson, as with Shaftesbury, its tendency to promote the general welfare of mankind. "That we may see how Love or Benevolence is the foundation of all apprehended excellence in social virtues, let us only observe that, amidst the diversity of sentiments on this head among various sects, this is still allowed to be the way of deciding the controversy about any disputed practice, namely, to inquire whether this conduct, or the contrary, will most effectually promote the public good. The morality is immediately adjusted, when the natural tendency, or influence of the action upon the universal natural good of mankind, is agreed upon. That which produces more good than evil in the Whole is acknowledged good; and what does not, is counted evil. In this case, we no other way regard the good of the actor, or that of those who are thus inquiring, than as they make a part of the great system. In our late debates about Passive Obedience and the right of Resistance in defence of privileges, the point disputed among men of sense was, whether universal submission would probably be attended

with greater natural evils than temporary insurrections, when privileges are invaded; and not, whether what tended in the whole to the public natural good, was also morally good." "In comparing the moral qualities of actions, in order to regulate our election among various actions proposed, or to find which of them has the greatest moral excellency, we are led by our moral sense of virtue to judge thus—that, in equal degrees of happiness expected to proceed from the action, the virtue is in proportion to the number of persons to whom the happiness shall extend (and here the dignity or moral importance of persons may compensate numbers), and, in equal numbers, the virtue is as the quantity of the happiness or natural good; or that the virtue is in a compound ratio of the quantity of good and number of enjoyers. In the same manner, the moral evil, or vice, is as the degree of misery and number of sufferers; so that that action is best which procures the greatest happiness for the greatest numbers, and that worst which, in like manner, occasions misery."<sup>1</sup> What was subsequently called the utilitarian standard is here unhesitatingly adopted by Hutcheson; and it is curious to notice that he actually employs the very phrase which became so celebrated in the mouth of Bentham, though afterwards reduced by that writer to the more simple expression "greatest happiness."

The controversy with Mr. Gilbert Burnet "concerning the true foundation of Virtue or Moral Goodness" proceeds throughout on the assumption of the truth of what would now be called the Utilitarian or Greatest Happiness Theory. The only question between the disputants is whether the ultimate principle of action is given by a sentiment, as is maintained by Hutcheson, or by an intuition of the reason, as

<sup>1</sup> Inquiry concerning Moral Good and Evil, Sect. 3.

is held by his opponent. Hutcheson's theory is well summed up in the following passage :—

“Ask a being who has selfish affections, why he pursues wealth? He will assign this truth as his exciting reason, ‘that wealth furnishes pleasures or happiness.’ Ask again, why he desires his own happiness or pleasure? I cannot divine what proposition he would assign as the reason moving him to it. This is indeed a true proposition, ‘There is a quality in his nature moving him to pursue happiness;’ but it is this quality or instinct in his nature which moves him, and not this proposition. Just so this is a truth, ‘that a certain medicine cures an ague;’ but it is not a proposition which cures the ague, nor is it any reflection or knowledge of our own nature which excites us to pursue happiness. If this being have also public affections; what are the exciting reasons for observing faith, or hazarding his life in war? He will assign this truth as a reason, ‘Such conduct tends to the good of mankind.’ Go a step further, why does he pursue the good of mankind? If his affections be really disinterested, without any selfish view, he has no exciting reason; the public good is an ultimate end to this series of desires.”<sup>2</sup>

We must be careful, however, to distinguish between mere Natural Good and that which is properly denominated Moral Good, which, besides bringing us advantage, also elicits our moral approbation. “That the perceptions of Moral Good and Evil are perfectly different from those of Natural Good, or Advantage, every one must convince himself, by reflecting upon the different manner in which he finds himself affected when these objects occur to him. Had we no sense of good distinct from the advantage or interest arising from the external senses and the perceptions of beauty and harmony; our admiration and love toward a fruitful field, or commodious

<sup>2</sup> Letters concerning the Foundation of Virtue, Letter VI.

habitation, would be much the same with what we have toward a generous friend, or any noble character. For both are, or may be, advantageous to us. And we should no more admire any action, or love any person, in a distant country or age, whose influence could not extend to us, than we love the mountains of Peru, while we are unconcerned in the Spanish Trade. We should have the same sentiments and affections toward inanimate beings, which we have toward rational agents; which yet every one knows to be false. Upon comparison, we say, 'Why should we admire or love with esteem inanimate beings? They have no intention of Good to us. Their nature makes them fit for our uses, which they neither know nor study to serve. But it is not so with rational agents. They study our interest, and delight in our happiness, and are benevolent toward us.' We are all then conscious of the difference between that Love and Esteem, or perception of Moral Excellence, which Benevolence excites toward the person in whom we observe it, and that opinion of natural goodness, which only raises desire of possession toward the good object."<sup>3</sup> An action, then, to be morally good, must not only be attended with good consequences, but also originate in good affections. But the question still remains, What are good affections, and Why do they approve themselves to us as such? Surely, the answer is, that those affections are good which promote the general welfare, and that they approve themselves to us, because, by observation and on reflection, we discover that they do so. Thus, if any affection, of which we generally approve, is found, when pursued to an inordinate degree, or applied to particular objects, to be attended with evil results, as is the case, for instance, with indiscriminate charity, misplaced love, excessive resentment, or a blind and injudicious fondness for

<sup>3</sup> Inquiry concerning Moral Good and Evil, Sect. 1.

children, its exercise henceforth becomes to all rational and reflective persons no longer an occasion of praise, but of blame. And yet again it may be asked, if a tendency to promote the general welfare is the only measure even of good affections, why are we animated with such different feelings towards a fertile field or a commodious habitation and a generous friend? Is it not that we *sympathize* with the one, and not with the other; that we regard our friend as a voluntary agent, actuated by motives similar to those by which we are ourselves actuated, and evidencing dispositions similar to those of which we are conscious in ourselves, when our motives and dispositions are such as most approve themselves to us? But this difference in the rational or irrational, the voluntary or involuntary, character of the objects which we approve is perfectly compatible with an identical test of excellence. A field or a habitation may be excellent in its kind, whatever be the character of its possessor. An act can only be morally good, if it be the act of a rational agent, and if the agent, in performing the act, be animated by a virtuous disposition; but then the only intelligible test of a virtuous disposition is its tendency to promote the public good. The ultimate criterion is the same, however circuitous may be the mode of its application, and however different may be the nature of the objects to which it is applied. These considerations, I think, will be found to remove any apparent discrepancies in the language which Hutcheson employs, when speaking of the standard by which our acts are to be measured. That standard, I do not doubt, he conceived of as an external standard,—namely, the tendency of an act, or rather of the disposition from which it springs, to promote happiness and to alleviate misery, to the greatest extent possible under existing circumstances. At the same time, it must be acknowledged that the adoption of an external



standard, requiring so much care and reflection in its application, ought to have led him to see that the moral faculty, by which the standard was to be applied, is by no means so simple and instinctive as he imagined it to be, and that, consequently, these two parts of his system are in reality inconsistent.

It must not, however, be supposed that Hutcheson invariably ignored the necessity of educating the Moral Sense. Had he pursued to its consequences, and more frequently attended to, the thought expressed in such a passage as the following, in which the moral faculty and the moral standard are brought into juxtaposition, his system would doubtless have been saved from most of the difficulties and inconsistencies in which it is now involved. "In governing our moral sense, and desires of virtue, nothing is more necessary than to study the nature and tendency of human actions; and to extend our views to the whole species, or to all sensitive natures, as far as they can be affected by our conduct. Our moral sense thus regulated, and constantly followed in our actions, may be the most constant source of the most stable pleasure."<sup>4</sup>

As connected with Hutcheson's adoption of what we should now call the utilitarian standard, it may be noticed that he proposes a kind of moral algebra, for the purpose of "computing the morality of actions." This calculus occurs in the "Inquiry concerning Moral Good and Evil," sect. 3. It does nothing more than state in symbolical language a few obvious deductions from his general principles.

Closely connected with the adoption of the General Good as the criterion of morality is what has been called the "benevolent theory" of morals. Hobbes had maintained that all

<sup>4</sup> The Nature and Conduct of the Passions, Sect. 6.

our actions, however disguised under apparent sympathy, have their roots in self-love. Hutcheson, following or rather exaggerating the doctrine already laid down by Shaftesbury,<sup>5</sup> not only maintains that benevolence is the sole and direct source of many of our actions, but, by a not unnatural recoil from the repellent tenets of Hobbes, that it is the only source of those actions of which, on reflection, we approve as virtuous. "If we examine all the actions which are accounted amiable anywhere, and inquire into the grounds upon which they are approved, we shall find that, in the opinion of the person who approves them, they always appear as benevolent, or flowing from love of others and a study of their happiness, whether the approver be one of the persons beloved or profited or not; so that all those kind affections which incline us to make others happy, and all actions supposed to flow from such affections, appear morally good, if, while they are benevolent toward some persons, they be not pernicious to others. Nor shall we find anything amiable in any action whatsoever, where there is no benevolence imagined; nor in any disposition, or capacity, which is not supposed applicable to and designed for benevolent purposes."<sup>6</sup> Consistently with this position, actions which flow from self-love only are pronounced to be morally indifferent: "The actions which flow solely from self-love, and yet evidence no want of benevolence, having no hurtful effects upon others, seem perfectly indifferent in a moral sense, and neither raise the love or hatred of the observer."<sup>7</sup> But surely, by the common consent of civilized men, prudence, temperance, cleanliness, industry, self-respect, and, in general, the "per-

<sup>5</sup> For Shaftesbury's statement of the "benevolent theory," which is more qualified than that of Hutcheson, see pp. 65—7, and pp. 72—6.

<sup>6</sup> Inquiry concerning Moral Good and Evil, Sect. 3.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

sonal virtues," as they are called, are regarded, and rightly regarded, as fitting objects of moral approbation. This consideration could hardly escape any author, however wedded to his own system, and Hutcheson attempts to extricate himself from the difficulty by laying down the position that a man may justly regard himself as a part of the rational system, and may thus "be, in part, an object of his own benevolence,"<sup>8</sup>—a curious abuse of terms, which really concedes the question at issue. Moreover, he acknowledges that, though self-love does not merit approbation, neither, except in its extreme forms, does it merit condemnation. "We do not positively condemn those as evil who will not sacrifice their private interest to the advancement of the positive good of others, unless the private interest be very small and the public good very great."<sup>9</sup> The satisfaction of the dictates of self-love, too, is one of the very conditions of the preservation of society. "Our reason can indeed discover certain bounds, within which we may not only act from self-love consistently with the good of the whole, but every mortal's acting thus within these bounds for his own good is absolutely necessary for the good of the whole; and the want of such self-love would be universally pernicious."<sup>1</sup> "Self-love is really as necessary to the good of the whole as benevolence,—as that attraction which causes the cohesion of the parts is as necessary to the regular state of the whole as gravitation."<sup>2</sup> To press home the inconsistencies involved in these various statements would be a superfluous task.

Hutcheson's benevolent view of human nature is illustrated also by his denying that malevolence is an original principle

<sup>8</sup> Inquiry concerning Moral Good and Evil, Sect. 3.

<sup>9</sup> Illustrations upon the Moral Sense, Sect. 6.

<sup>1</sup> Inquiry concerning Moral Good and Evil, Sect. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Inquiry concerning Moral Good and Evil, Sect. 17.

in the constitution of man. "Perhaps our nature is not capable of desiring the misery of any being calmly, farther than it may be necessary to the safety of the innocent; we may find, perhaps, that there is no quality in any object which would excite in us pure disinterested malice, or calm desire of misery for its own sake."<sup>3</sup> Against this position, which is maintained also by Butler,<sup>4</sup> it might be objected that, even amongst very young children, we often find a singular and precocious love of cruelty. This is, undoubtedly, one of the most curious facts in moral psychology, but it may perhaps be accounted for by supposing it to originate in a combination of morbid curiosity with an equally morbid love of power.

The ultimate source of moral distinctions is, of course, placed by Hutcheson, as it is by Shaftesbury, in the original make of human nature. It would be superfluous to quote passages to show that the benevolent affections, and the moral sense, "or determination of our minds to approve every kind affection, either in ourselves or others, and all publicly useful actions which we imagine flow from such affections," are, according to Hutcheson's scheme of moral psychology, incapable of analysis into simpler elements.

In the analysis of the mental process preceding action, Hutcheson's view of the respective provinces of Reason and Desire is perfectly just. Our ends are suggested by the emotional part of our nature, while Reason discovers the

<sup>3</sup> On the Nature and Conduct of the Passions, Sect. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Sermon IX. "Resentment being out of the case, there is not, properly speaking, any such thing as direct ill-will in one man towards another." If this position be true, there seems to be no adequate reason for confining it to our feelings towards other human beings.

means for their attainment.<sup>5</sup> "We have indeed many confused harangues on this subject, telling us, 'We have two principles of action,—reason and affection or passion; the former in common with angels, the latter with brutes: no action is wise, or good, or reasonable, to which we are not excited by reason, as distinct from all affections; or, if any such actions as flow from affections be good, it is only by chance, or materially and not formally.' As if indeed reason, or the knowledge of the relations of things, could excite to action when we proposed no end, or as if ends could be intended without desire or affection."<sup>6</sup> "We may transiently observe what has occasioned the use of the word reasonable, as an epithet of only virtuous actions. Though we have instincts determining us to desire ends, without supposing any previous reasoning; yet it is by use of our reason that we find out the means of obtaining our ends. When we do not use our reason, we often are disappointed of our end. We therefore call those actions which are effectual to their ends reasonable, in one sense of that word."<sup>7</sup>

Any direct discussion of the vexed question of liberty and necessity appears to be carefully avoided in Hutcheson's professedly ethical works. But, in the *Synopsis Metaphysicæ*, he touches on it in no less than three places, briefly stating both sides of the question, but evidently inclining to that which he designates as the opinion of the Stoics in opposition to what he designates as the opinion of the Peripatetics. This is substantially the same as the doctrine propounded by

<sup>5</sup> For a more detailed analysis, see pp. 79—81, where I have discussed the same subject in relation to Shaftesbury. Hutcheson himself pursues the analysis into some detail, in his "Letters concerning the True Foundation of Virtue."

<sup>6</sup> Illustrations upon the Moral Sense, Sect. 1.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

Hobbes and Locke (to the latter of whom Hutcheson refers in a note), namely, that our will is determined by motives in conjunction with our general character and habit of mind, and that the only true liberty is the liberty of acting as we will, not the liberty of willing as we will. Though, however, his leaning is clear, he carefully avoids dogmatizing, and speaks of the difficulty as one which has always vexed the minds of pious and learned men, and on which both sides appeal in vain to our internal sense [that is to say consciousness].<sup>8</sup> As a practical conclusion, he earnestly deprecates the angry controversies and bitter dissensions to which the discussions on this subject had given rise.

On the independent character of Morality as a science, and on the various sanctions of conduct, less is said by Hutcheson than by Shaftesbury, though the two writers are in substantial agreement. Hutcheson's whole treatment of morals proceeds on the assumption that they constitute an independent branch of investigation, and in the "Illustrations upon the Moral Sense" there is a special section,<sup>9</sup> directed against those who "imagine that, to make an action virtuous, it is necessary that the agent should have previously known his action to be acceptable to the Deity, and have undertaken it chiefly with design to please or obey him." "Human Laws," he says elsewhere,<sup>1</sup> "may be called good, because of their conformity to the Divine. But to call the laws of the Supreme Deity good, or holy, or just, if all Goodness, Holiness, and Justice be constituted by Laws, or the will of

<sup>8</sup> Sed quæstionem hanc vexatissimam, quæ doctorum et piorum ingenia semper torserat, atque de qua utrinque frustra ad sensum cujusque internum provocatur, jam relinquamus." *Metaphysicæ Synopsis*, Pars II. cap. 2.

<sup>9</sup> Sect. 6.

<sup>1</sup> Inquiry concerning Moral Good and Evil, Sect. 7.

a superior any way revealed, must be an insignificant" [that is, a non-significant] "tautology, amounting to no more than this, 'That God wills what he wills.'" In reply to those who allege that, "in those actions of our own which we call good, the ground of our approbation, and the motive to them, is that we suppose the Deity will reward them," he answers that "it is enough to observe that many have high notions of Honour, Faith, Generosity, Justice, who have scarce any opinions about the Deity, or any thoughts of future rewards, and that many abhor anything which is treacherous, cruel, or unjust, without any regard to future punishments."<sup>2</sup> Moreover, as he remarks in another place,<sup>3</sup> "Benevolence scarce deserves the name, when we desire not nor delight in the good of others, further than it serves our own ends." Nay, on so limited a conception of the grounds of moral approbation and the motives to moral action, what right have we to ascribe benevolence to the Deity, or to expect Him to reward virtue? "Virtue is commonly supposed, upon this scheme, to be only a consulting our own happiness in the most artful way, consistently with the good of the whole; and in Vice the same thing is foolishly pursued, in a manner which will not so probably succeed, and which is contrary to the good of the whole. But how is the Deity concerned in this whole, if every agent always acts from Self-love?" On the other hand, the higher religious sanction, the love and veneration of God, furnishes, together with the moral sanction strictly so called, the purest of all motives to the exercise of virtue. "This love" is approved by the moral faculty as "the greatest excellence of mind;" and it "is too the most useful in the system, since the admiration and love of moral

<sup>2</sup> Inquiry concerning Moral Good and Evil, Sect. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Sect. 2, Art. 7.

perfection is a natural incitement to all good offices.”<sup>4</sup> It may be noticed that, in speaking of the sanctions supplied by human law, Hutcheson regards them as simply preventive and deterrent. “Human punishments are only methods of self-defence; in which the degrees of guilt are not the proper measure, but the necessity of restraining actions for the safety of the public.”<sup>5</sup> This view is strictly in harmony with the criterion of morality adopted by Hutcheson, and forms another point of agreement with the later utilitarian school.

Much of Hutcheson’s posthumous work, *A System of Moral Philosophy*, as well as the short Introduction to *Moral Philosophy*, originally written in Latin, is occupied with the deduction of specific rights and duties. “His treatment of these,” Mr. Sidgwick says, “though decidedly inferior in methodical clearness and precision, does not differ in principle from that of Paley or Bentham, except that he lays greater stress on the immediate conduciveness of actions to the happiness of individuals, and more often refers in a merely supplementary or restrictive way to their tendencies in respect of general happiness.”<sup>6</sup>

As Hutcheson’s ethical system is so closely allied with that of Shaftesbury, it is unnecessary that I should devote any further space to it. Its relation to later systems will be briefly considered in my last chapter.

<sup>4</sup> System of Moral Philosophy, Book I., ch. 10.

<sup>5</sup> Illustrations upon the Moral Sense, Sect. 6, Art. 6.

<sup>6</sup> Article on Ethics in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.



## CHAPTER III.

HUTCHESON'S WRITINGS ON MENTAL PHILOSOPHY, LOGIC,  
AND ÆSTHETICS.

IN the sphere of mental philosophy and logic, Hutcheson's contributions are by no means so important or original as in that of moral philosophy, and, as they are rather curious in their relation to other systems than of much value in themselves, I do not propose to examine them at any length. In the former subject, the influence of Locke is apparent throughout. All the main outlines of his philosophy seem, at first sight, to be accepted as a matter of course. Thus, in stating the theory of the moral sense, Hutcheson is peculiarly careful to repudiate the doctrine of innate ideas, admitting that "the vast diversity of moral principles, in various nations and ages, is a good argument against innate ideas or principles," though it does not "evidence mankind to be void of a moral sense to perceive Virtue or Vice in actions, when they occur to their observation."<sup>1</sup> At the same time, he acknowledges that we might call certain axioms "innate," in the sense that it is natural to man, as he grows up, to recognize their truth, and that, as a fact, almost all men do so.<sup>2</sup>

All our ideas are, as by Locke, referred to external or internal sense, or, in other words, to sensation and reflection,

<sup>1</sup> Inquiry concerning Moral Good and Evil, Sect. 4. Cp. sect. 1, ad fin.

<sup>2</sup> *Synopsis Metaphysicæ*, Pars I., cap. 2.

or, as Hutcheson himself phrases it, sensation and consciousness. "These two powers of perception, sensation and consciousness" (the latter being described as "an inward sensation, perception, or consciousness, of all the actions, passions, and modifications of the mind, by which its own perceptions, judgments, reasonings, affections, feelings may become its object"), "introduce into the mind all its materials of knowledge. All our primary and direct ideas or notions are derived from one or other of these sources. But the mind never rests in bare perception; it compares the ideas received, discerns their relations, marks the changes made in objects by our own action or that of others; it inquires into the natures, proportions, causes, effects, antecedents, consequents of everything, when it is not diverted by some importunate appetite. All these several powers of external sensation, consciousness, judging, and reasoning, are commonly called the acts of the understanding."<sup>3</sup> It is, however, a most important modification of this doctrine, when he states that the ideas of extension, figure, motion, and rest "are more properly ideas accompanying the sensations of sight and touch than the sensations of either of these senses;" that the idea of self accompanies every thought; and that the ideas of number, duration, and existence accompany every other idea whatsoever.<sup>4</sup> In this conception of ideas invariably concomitant with other ideas, Hutcheson is approximating very closely to the doctrine of innate ideas, and indeed it is difficult

<sup>3</sup> *System of Moral Philosophy*, Book I., ch. 1. Cp. *Logicæ Compend.* Pars I., cap. 1; *Syn. Metaph.*, Pars I., cap. 1. In the latter passage he says that the existence of things is made known either by "internal sense, as each man knows his own existence;" or by external sense, "which, by its natural force, sufficiently establishes the existence of other things;" or by Reasoning; or by Testimony.

<sup>4</sup> See *Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions*, Sect. i., Art. 1; *Syn. Metaph.*, Pars I., cap. 1, Pars II., cap. 1.

to see on what other hypothesis the theory can be consistently maintained. For, though the "accompanying ideas" require other ideas to excite them, it would seem as if they must already be latent in the mind, in order to be excited. The constantly repeated statement that all our ideas are ultimately to be traced to external or internal sensation (Sensation or Reflection) is certainly not easily reconciled with the existence of "accompanying ideas," unless indeed, which may possibly be the case, Hutcheson meant nothing more by this expression than that such ideas are produced in us by a plurality of senses—that, in fact, they are "common sensibles."<sup>5</sup>

In addition to the repudiation of the doctrine of Innate Ideas, and the recognition of Sensation and Reflection as the ultimate sources of all knowledge, other important points in which Hutcheson follows the lead of Locke are his depreciation of the importance of the so-called laws of thought, his distinction between the primary and secondary qualities of bodies, the position that we cannot know the inmost essences of things ("intimæ rerum naturæ sive essentiæ"), though they excite various ideas in us, and the assumption that external things are known only through the medium of ideas, though, at the same time, we are assured of the existence of an external world corresponding to these ideas. Hutcheson attempts to account for our assurance of the reality of an external world by referring it to a natural instinct. "Although our minds

<sup>5</sup> Sir William Hamilton (Ed. of Reid's Works, p. 124, note) points out that Reid was anticipated by Hutcheson, in representing the ideas of extension, figure, motion, and rest as concomitant rather than as direct ideas of touch and sight. Reid (Ed. Hamilton, p. 126) expressly says that these ideas cannot come either from sensation or from reflection. The reader who wishes to acquaint himself with the accounts given by modern psychologists of the mode in which we acquire these ideas should refer to Bain on the *Senses and the Intellect*, Herbert Spencer's *Psychology*, and Ribot's *Psychologie Allemande Contemporaine*.

can not attain to the knowledge of anything, except by the intervention of some notion or idea (since not things themselves, but ideas or notions, are what are proximately presented to the mind); yet are we compelled by nature herself to refer very many of our ideas to external things, such ideas being, as it were, the images or representations of the things themselves.”<sup>6</sup> This is what Sir William Hamilton<sup>7</sup> calls the scheme of Cosmothetic Idealism or Hypothetical Realism, which, while positing the existence of an external world, maintains that we are only conscious of the ideas which are representative of it. The great majority of philosophers, as Hamilton points out, have maintained this opinion, though there have been some few who have been hardy enough, like Berkeley, to deny the reality of any non-mental prototype of our ideas, and others, like Sir William Hamilton himself and probably Reid, who have held, with the vulgar, that not only does an external world exist but that we are directly conscious of it. Hutcheson does not rely solely on the testimony of a natural instinct to the reality of external things. He proceeds to adduce arguments. One of these, which is an adaptation of an argument employed by Locke,<sup>8</sup> is based on the contrast between the faint ideas of memory and the more vivid ideas which we derive from the present impressions of sense. We have no doubt that the faint idea, which we are able to recall whenever we choose, represents the more vivid idea which we experienced before. And, similarly, we may be certain that the more vivid ideas themselves represent external prototypes. Locke appears to state the argument more forcibly, when he asks whether a man “be not invincibly conscious to himself of a different percep-

<sup>6</sup> *Metaph. Syn.*, Pars I., cap. 1.

<sup>7</sup> Essay on Idealism in Hamilton's Discussions.

<sup>8</sup> Essay, Bk. IV., ch. 2, § 14.

tion, when he looks on the sun by day, and thinks on it by night, when he actually tastes wormwood, or smells a rose, or only thinks on that savour or odour?" Of all the arguments employed against those who question the reality of non-mental<sup>9</sup> causes of our sensations, I think this one of the most effective. The difference between the presented and the reproduced sensation requires to be accounted for in some way or other, and no explanation is so simple or so adequate as that implied in the ordinary belief, that the presented, or more vivid, sensation is due to some force, of an order altogether different from the phenomena of mind, impressed from without. Another argument advanced by Hutcheson is that each man has a direct consciousness of himself, and of his own personal identity, as distinct from his fleeting sensations, emotions, and thoughts. By parity of reasoning, there must be things, having a real existence, independently of our ideas of them. As if aware that this latter argument is not a very cogent one, he recurs to the statement that we are led by a natural instinct to refer our ideas, or at least those which are derived through sensation, to external objects, as the causes of them.

The secondary qualities of bodies, that is, the qualities

<sup>9</sup> I employ this expression rather than the word "external," because an absolute Idealist, who denies the real existence of anything in the Universe but Mind, may still refer our sensations to an external source, namely, the mind or will of God. Thus, Berkeley, in his Third Dialogue between Hylas and Philonous, says: "It is plain that sensible ideas have an existence exterior to my mind; since I find them by experience to be independent of it. There is therefore some other mind wherein they exist, during the intervals between the times of my perceiving them. And, as the same is true with regard to all other finite created spirits, it necessarily follows there is an omnipresent eternal mind, which knows and comprehends all things, and exhibits them to our view in such a manner, and according to such rules, as He Himself hath ordained, and are by us termed the laws of nature."

proper to some particular sense, as colours, odours, sounds, Hutcheson holds, with Locke, have no resemblance to anything in the bodies themselves, though, by a fixed law of nature, the bodies have, through their primary qualities, a power of exciting such ideas in us. Of the correspondence or similitude between our ideas of the primary qualities of things (that is to say, duration, number, extension, figure, motion, and rest) and the primary qualities themselves God alone can be assigned as the cause. This similitude has been effected by Him through a law of nature. "Whether this first perception of the primary qualities be called an active or a passive operation of the mind, no other cause of the similitude or correspondence between ideas of this kind and the qualities themselves can be assigned than God Himself, who, by an established law of nature, brings it about that the notions, which are excited by present objects, may be like the objects themselves, or, at least, represent their habitudes or qualities, if not their true quantities."<sup>1</sup> Locke had repeatedly stated that "the primary qualities of bodies are resemblances of them, and their patterns do really exist in the bodies themselves" (see, for instance, *Essay*, Bk. II. ch. 8, sect. 15), and he also speaks of God "annexing" certain ideas to certain motions of bodies (*Ibid.*, sect. 13, and elsewhere); but nowhere, I believe, does he propound a theory so precise and definite as that here propounded by Hutcheson, which reminds us at least as much of the speculations of Malebranche as of those of Locke.

Amongst the more important points in which Hutcheson diverges from Locke is his account of the idea of personal identity, which he appears to have regarded as made known to us directly by consciousness, though itself distinct from consciousness; instead of being identical with, and there-

<sup>1</sup> *Syn. Metaph.*, Pars II., cap. 1.

fore, of course, limited by, consciousness, present or remembered. "That his own mind remains the same, every one is conscious to himself, by an internal perception, most trustworthy, but inexplicable, by which he knows that his own mind is altogether different from every other mind."<sup>3</sup> "Every one retains a consciousness of himself, or a sense of such a kind, as does not permit him to doubt whether he remains the same to-day that he was yesterday, howsoever changed his thoughts may be, or even though they cease awhile altogether."<sup>4</sup> It would have been better to derive the idea of the Same Self (which, of course, involves the idea of a Self or Ego, as distinct from its modifications), not from a single act of consciousness, but from the comparison of two or more acts. Whenever I pass from some present sensation or idea to some sensation or idea which I have formerly experienced, or to some sensation or idea which I expect to experience in the future, this comparison is found, on reflection, to imply the idea of Personal Identity, or of the Same Self as the subject of the two mental acts compared. And, when the idea of the Same Self has been thus gained, it may

<sup>2</sup> "Since consciousness always accompanies thinking, and 'tis that that makes every one to be what he calls Self, and thereby distinguishes himself from all other thinking things, in this alone consists Personal Identity, that is the sameness of a rational being. And as far as this Consciousness can be extended backwards to any past action or thought, so far reaches the Identity of that Person; it is the same Self now as it was then, and 'tis by the same Self with this present one that now reflects on it that that action was done." Locke's Essay, Bk. II., ch. 27, § 9. This explanation seems to involve the extraordinary paradox that I am not the same person that I was this day twenty years ago, the events of which I have entirely forgotten, or even the same person that I was last night, during which I was in a sound, and, so far as I know, unconscious sleep.

<sup>3</sup> *Metaph. Syn.*, Pars I., cap. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Pars I., cap. 1.

be regarded as the subject, in the past, of many acts which have now altogether passed out of recollection, as well as, in the future, of many acts of which we can now form no anticipation.

The distinction between body and mind, "corpus" or "materia" and "res cogitans," is more emphatically accentuated by Hutcheson than by Locke, who, however, notwithstanding his suggestion that God might, if He pleased, "superadd to Matter a Faculty of Thinking," is by no means to be ranked as a Materialist.<sup>5</sup> Generally, Hutcheson speaks as if we had a direct consciousness of mind as distinct from body,<sup>6</sup> though, in the posthumous work on *Moral Philosophy*, he expressly states that we know mind as we know body "by qualities immediately perceived, though the substance of both be unknown."<sup>7</sup>

The distinction between perception proper and sensation proper, which occurs by implication though it is not explicitly worked out,<sup>8</sup> the hint as to the imperfection of the ordinary division of the external senses into five classes already alluded to, the limitation of consciousness to a special mental faculty, namely, that by which we perceive our own minds, and all that goes on within them,<sup>9</sup> and the disposition to refer on

<sup>5</sup> See my "Locke" in the series of *English Men of Letters*, pp. 139, 140. Locke regarded his own suggestion, when applied to man, as an improbable one, and that the "Something," which has "existed from eternity," must "necessarily be a cogitative being," he held to admit of demonstration (Essay, Bk. IV., ch. 10).

<sup>6</sup> See, for instance, *Syn. Metaph.*, Pars ii. cap. 3.

<sup>7</sup> Bk. I. ch. 1.

<sup>8</sup> See Hamilton's Lectures on Metaphysics, Lect. 24; Hamilton's edition of Dugald Stewart's Works, vol. v. p. 420.

<sup>9</sup> "Cujus ope nota sunt ea omnia, quæ in mente geruntur." . . . "Hac animi vi Se novit quisque." *Syn. Metaph.*, Pars ii. cap. 1. This limitation of Consciousness to a specific faculty of self-knowledge, in which Hutcheson is followed by Reid and Stewart, is severely criticized



disputed questions of philosophy not so much to formal arguments as to the testimony of "consciousness" and our natural instincts,<sup>1</sup> are also amongst the points in which Hutcheson supplemented or departed from the philosophy of Locke. The last point can hardly fail to suggest, to such of my readers as are acquainted with the later speculations of the Scottish school, the "common-sense philosophy" of Reid, and here it may be remarked that the interest attaching to Hutcheson's psychological and metaphysical views consists very largely in the intermediate position which they occupy between the system of Locke and that of Reid and the later Scottish school. If we confine ourselves to merely enumerating detached questions, he perhaps stands nearer to Locke, but in the general spirit of his philosophy he seems to approach more closely to his Scottish successors.

The short *Compendium of Logic*, which is more original than such works usually are, is chiefly remarkable for the large proportion of psychological matter which it contains. In these parts of the book Hutcheson mainly follows Locke. The technicalities of the subject are passed lightly over, and the book is eminently readable. It may be specially noticed that he distinguishes between the mental result and its verbal expression [idea—term; judgment—proposition], that he constantly employs the word "idea," and that he defines logical truth as "the agreement of the signs with the things by Sir W. Hamilton, who, in accordance with the nomenclature and teaching of most philosophers, makes Consciousness coextensive with our knowledge and our cognitive faculties in general,—"the genus under which our several faculties of knowledge are contained as species," and of which "they are only modifications." See Hamilton's *Lectures on Metaphysics*, Lects. XII., XIII.; Edition of Reid, Notes H, I.

<sup>1</sup> "Ad gravissima quædam in philosophia dogmata amplectenda, non argumentis aut ratiocinationibus, ex rerum perspecta natura petitis, sed potius sensu quodam interno, usu, atque naturæ impulsu quodam aut instinctu ducimur." *Syn. Metaph.*, Pars II. cap. 3.

signified," or "the agreement of the proposition with things themselves,"<sup>2</sup> thus implicitly repudiating a merely formal view of logic. This work is now only very rarely to be met with.

Hutcheson may claim to have been one of the earliest modern writers on æsthetics. His speculations on this subject are contained in the *Inquiry concerning Beauty, Order, Harmony, and Design*, the first of the two treatises published in 1725, which, Professor Veitch<sup>3</sup> reminds us, preceded the treatise of the Père André in France (1741), and that of Baumgarten in Germany (1750). He maintains that we are endowed with a special sense by which we perceive beauty, harmony, and proportion. This is a *reflex* sense, because it presupposes the action of the external senses of sight and hearing. It may be called an *internal* sense, both in order to distinguish its perceptions from the mere perceptions of sight and hearing, and because "in some other affairs, where our external senses are not much concerned, we discern a sort of beauty, very like, in many respects, to that observed in sensible objects, and accompanied with like pleasure."<sup>4</sup> The latter reason leads him to call attention to the beauty perceived in universal truths, in the operations of general causes, and in moral principles and actions. Thus, the analogy between beauty and virtue, which was so favourite a topic with Shaftesbury, becomes also prominent in the writings of Hutcheson. Scattered up and down the treatise, there are many important

<sup>2</sup> "Veritas Logica est Convenientia signorum cum rebus significatis." *Log. Compend.*, Pars II., cap. 1. He adds: "Veritas Ethica est Convenientia signorum cum mentis sententia." In the *Syn. Metaph.*, Pars I., cap. 3, he defines "Veritas Logica" as "Propositionis convenientia cum rebus ipsis."

<sup>3</sup> *Mind*, Vol. II., p. 211.

<sup>4</sup> *Inquiry*, &c., Sect. 1.

and interesting observations, such as that what we properly call the beautiful always implies uniformity amidst variety. "To speak in the mathematical style, it seems to be in a compound ratio of Uniformity and Variety; so that where the Uniformity of bodies is equal, the Beauty is as the Variety; and where the Variety is equal, the Beauty is as the Uniformity."<sup>5</sup> Hence the internal sense, or Sense of Beauty, spoken of above, may be defined as "a passive power of receiving ideas of beauty from all objects in which there is Uniformity amidst Variety."<sup>6</sup> That objects of this kind are calculated to give us the Sense of Beauty, is "probably not the effect of necessity but of choice in the Supreme Agent, who constituted our Senses,"<sup>7</sup> His design being to discover Himself to us not only as omnipotent, but also as wise and good. As in the human constitution, Hutcheson held that there is no original principle of malevolence, so he holds that, among the objects of nature and art, "there is no form which seems necessarily disagreeable of itself, when we dread no other evil from it, and compare it with nothing better of the kind." "Deformity is only the absence of Beauty, or deficiency in the Beauty expected in any species." "Our Sense of Beauty seems designed to give us positive pleasure, but not positive pain or disgust, any further than what arises from disappointment."<sup>8</sup> To the student of mental philosophy it may be specially interesting to remark that Hutcheson both applies the principle of association to explain our ideas of beauty and also sets limits to its application, insisting on there being "a natural power of perception or sense of beauty in objects, antecedent to all custom, education, or example," and on "some objects being immediately the occasions of this

<sup>5</sup> Inquiry, &c., Sect. 2.

<sup>7</sup> Sect. 8.

<sup>6</sup> Sect. 6.

<sup>8</sup> Sect. 6.

pleasure of beauty," without any regard to their convenience and use.<sup>9</sup>

Though Hutcheson employs the principle of Association for the purpose of explaining our tastes and distastes, in the matter of Beauty and Deformity, more sparingly than many of his successors, some of his remarks on this head are peculiarly just and suggestive. Take, for instance, the following passages. "Associations of Ideas make objects pleasant and delightful, which are not naturally apt to give any such pleasures; and, in the same way, the casual conjunctions of ideas may give a disgust, where there is nothing disagreeable in the form itself. And this is the occasion of many fantastic aversions to figures of some animals, and to some other forms. Thus swine, serpents of all kinds, and some insects really beautiful enough, are beheld with aversion by many people, who have got some accidental ideas associated to them. And for distastes of this kind no other account can be given." "The beauty of trees, their cool shades, and their aptness to conceal from observation, have made groves and woods the usual retreat to those who love solitude, especially to the religious, the pensive, the melancholy, and the amorous. And do not we find that we have so joined the ideas of these dispositions of mind with those external objects, that they always recur to us along with them? The cunning of the heathen priests might make such obscure places the scene of the fictitious appearances of their Deities; and hence we join ideas of something divine to them. We know the like effect in the ideas of our churches, from the perpetual use of them only in religious exercises. The faint light in Gothic buildings has had the same association of a very foreign idea,

<sup>9</sup> See Inquiry, &c., Sects. 1, 6, 7; Hamilton's Lectures on Metaphysics, Lect. 44, ad fin.

which our poet shows in his epithet,—“A dim religious light.” In like manner, it is known that often all the circumstances of actions, or places, or dresses of persons, or voice, or song, which have occurred at any time together, when we were strongly affected by any passion, will be so connected that any one of these will make all the rest recur. And this is often the occasion both of great pleasure and pain, delight and aversion to many objects, which of themselves might have been perfectly indifferent to us : but these approbations or distastes are remote from the ideas of beauty, being plainly different ideas.” “We know how agreeable a very wild country may be to any person who has spent the cheerful days of his youth in it, and how disagreeable very beautiful places may be, if they were the scenes of his misery. And this” (namely, the fact that many other ideas, besides those of Beauty and Harmony, may either please or displease, according to persons’ tempers and past circumstances) “may help us, in many cases, to account for the diversities of fancy, without denying the uniformity of our internal Sense of Beauty.”

<sup>1</sup> Sect. 6.

## CHAPTER IV.

## RECEPTION AND INFLUENCE OF HUTCHESON'S WRITINGS.

THE publication of Hutcheson's two first treatises soon provoked a friendly controversy in the columns of the *London Journal*, where his ethical theories were criticized by Mr. Gilbert Burnet, writing under the signature of Philaretus, Hutcheson replying under that of Philanthropus. "The debate," Dr. Leechman informs us, "was left unfinished, Philaretus' death having put an end to the correspondence, which was proposed to have been afterwards carried on in a more private manner." Mr. Burnet, in his preface to the published letters, praises "the beautiful structure which the author has raised," but regards it as resting on no sufficient foundation. Such a foundation for morality has, he thinks, been laid by Cumberland, Clarke, and Wollaston, and he enunciates it in this one simple proposition, "That virtue, or moral goodness, is founded on truth." The main question at issue between the two correspondents is whether the ultimate grounds of moral action are supplied by reason or by feeling. "Philaretus," says Hutcheson, "seems to me to maintain, 'That there is some exciting reason to virtue, antecedent to all kind affections or instinct toward the good of others: and that, in like manner, there are some justifying reasons, or truths, antecedent to any moral sense, causing approbation.' The author of the *Inquiry*, I apprehend, must maintain, 'That desires, affections, instincts, must be previous

to all exciting reasons, and a moral sense antecedent to all justifying reasons.'” The pursuit of the good of others, Hutcheson holds, is prompted by an instinct, and approved by the moral sense. “Our moral sense and affections determine our end, but reason must find out the means.” Burnet, on the other hand, holds that the virtuous man follows his benevolent instincts and his moral sense, simply because reason approves of them. “We deem our affections and our moral sense to be reasonable affections, and a reasonable sense, from their prompting us to the same conduct which reason approves and directs. And thus reason is the measure of the goodness or badness of our affections and moral sense, and consequently of the actions flowing from them, and not *vice versa*.” What makes the desire of public happiness a reasonable end is the truth “that it is best that all should be happy.” “If any one asks, Why it is best, I would answer him as I would do, if he asked me why four is more than two : It is self-evident.” “The self-evident truth, ‘That it is in itself best that all should be happy,’ is immediately perceivable by all rational natures.” We do not possess Hutcheson’s reply, but surely he might have asked, And why should I pursue what is best, or approve of the pursuit of what is best? It is quite conceivable that I might intellectually assent to the proposition “that it is best that all should be happy,” without having any desire to promote their happiness, or experiencing the slightest feeling of approbation, when I find that it is promoted. But if men were constituted in this way, would morality, as we understand it, have any existence? The root of morals, the ultimate inducement to moral conduct, is surely to be discovered in those original impulses of our nature which urge us to seek the good of ourselves and of others, and in those reflex feelings which approve or disapprove of actions, according as they are

or are not attended by these effects. Our emotions are, as it were, the raw material of morality. At the same time it must undoubtedly be granted that they are often transformed by the action of reason into what almost assumes the character of a new product. And perhaps Hutcheson and some other moralists, while rightly insisting on the ultimate origin of morality in the emotional part of human nature, have not laid sufficient stress on the office of the reason in constantly directing, co-ordinating, and adjusting our various desires, so as best to attain their ultimate ends. Those ends, however, it must be repeated, are, in the first instance, given by the self-regarding and sympathetic affections, largely as both such ends and the affections by which they are suggested may be purified, extended, and enlightened by the subsequent operations of reason, carrying effects up to their causes, tracing causes to their effects, and comparing the several consequences of our actions as well as the relative excellency and efficacy of our means.

In the same year (1728) in which Mr. Burnet's letters appeared in the *London Journal*, John Balguy, who has already been mentioned in connexion with Shaftesbury, published anonymously a tract on "the Foundation of Moral Goodness," which, like Burnet's letters, was designed as a refutation of Hutcheson's theory that Virtue has its ultimate origin in the affections and the moral sense. He begins with a well-turned compliment to Hutcheson, but soon proceeds to state that he conceives the question between them to be one of the utmost gravity. Balguy is a follower of Clarke, and thinks that he is investing morality with a more exalted character and a more binding force by laying its foundations, not in the constitution of human nature, which he regards as uncertain and relative, but in "the truth or nature of things themselves," which he regards as fixed and absolute. "The



reasons of things and the relations between moral agents" (terms, it may be noticed, which are sufficiently vague) are discoverable by the faculty of Reason, and are generally as plain as the truths of Mathematics. As for the Affections, they "are useful, in respect of human nature," yet they are "by no means essential to Virtue." "Nor can I think," he adds, "that any Instinct has a place in its constitution. To speak properly, Reason was not given us to regulate natural affection, but natural affection was given us to reinforce Reason, and make it more prevalent. The inferior principle must be intended as subservient to the superior, and not *vice versa*." But, however clear might be our perception of the tendency of actions or of the relations subsisting between rational or sensitive agents, how could we ascribe the epithets right and wrong, moral and immoral, either to our acts or judgments, unless we had exciting affections impelling us to pursue certain ends, and unless these ends, and the means by which they are attainable, were the objects of those peculiar reflex affections which we call moral approbation and disapprobation? We perceive a purely intellectual truth, but we do not desire it or approve it. And surely this difference is an essential one, and is wholly to be referred to the fact that moral actions and moral distinctions originate in the affections and not in the reason. The affections and the reason are both undoubtedly necessary factors in morality, but the initiative is not in the reason, but in the affections; and the true relation between the two is expressed, not by saying that the affections reinforce the reason, but by saying that the reason modifies, controls, and co-ordinates the affections. It may be remarked that Balguy does not, as Burnet apparently does, accept Hutcheson's practical test or criterion of moral conduct. "Is Virtue," he asks, "no otherwise good or amiable, than as it conduces to public or private advantage?"

Is there no absolute goodness in it? Are all its perfections relative and instrumental?" One would have been glad to see some instances of actions which are "absolutely good," though they neither contribute to public nor private advantage, but Balguy, like other writers of the same school, does not condescend to supply them. In the following year (1729), there appeared a "Second Part of the Foundation of Moral Goodness," "being an answer to certain remarks communicated by a gentleman to the author." This work also was published anonymously. Both tracts are well written, and show considerable acuteness, but, on the main point at issue, they leave Hutcheson, I think, in possession of the field.

Bishop Butler's Fifteen Sermons, which supply the principal materials for forming an estimate of his opinions on Ethics, were first published in 1726, the year after the publication of Hutcheson's two first treatises. They contain no reference to Hutcheson, or, so far as I can ascertain, any allusion to him, though, as I have already pointed out, there is a very close affinity between the "Conscience" of Butler and the "Moral Sense" of Shaftesbury and Hutcheson. In the Preface to the Second Edition of the Sermons, published in 1729, which contains the criticism of Shaftesbury, already examined, Hutcheson's works are still unnoticed. But, when Butler published the Analogy in 1736, he appended two short dissertations, one on Personal Identity, the other on the Nature of Virtue, in the latter of which, though Hutcheson's name is not expressly mentioned, his system was evidently in the author's mind throughout. Butler agrees with Hutcheson in recognizing a special Moral Faculty, nor does he question its emotional character. At the same time, he rightly suggests that there is a rational element in it. He seems indifferent, whether it be called "conscience, moral reason, moral sense, or divine reason." Whatever the name

we employ, "it is manifest, great part of common language and of common behaviour, over the world, is formed upon supposition of such a moral faculty ; whether considered as a sentiment of the understanding, or as a perception of the heart, or, which seems the truth, as including both." Hutcheson's apparent limitation of virtue to benevolence is very properly criticized, though, perhaps, his position is slightly exaggerated. "It deserves to be considered, whether men are more at liberty, in point of morals, to make themselves miserable without reason than to make other people so ; or dissolutely to neglect their own greater good, for the sake of a present lesser gratification, than they are to neglect the good of others whom nature has committed to their care. It should seem that a due concern about our own interest or happiness, and a reasonable endeavour to secure and promote it, which is, I think, very much the meaning of the word *prudence* in our language—it should seem that this is virtue, and the contrary behaviour faulty and blameable ; since, in the calmest way of reflection, we approve of the first, and condemn the other conduct, both in ourselves and others." The point, however, in Hutcheson's system to which Butler takes the gravest exception is his identification of the test or criterion of moral conduct with the tendency of actions to promote the general good. Butler himself confuses the moral criterion with the moral faculty ; in other words, he leaves the Conscience to pronounce its judgments arbitrarily, without any rule to guide itself by. "Man," he says, "hath the rule of right within ; what is wanting is only that he honestly attend to it."<sup>1</sup> Hence it is not surprising that he regards our moral nature as so constituted as to condemn some kinds of acts and to approve other kinds, "abstracted from all consideration which conduct is likeliest to produce an over-

<sup>1</sup> Sermon III.

balance of happiness or misery." But had he taken any pains to analyze the instances which he gives, namely, the condemnation of falsehood, unprovoked violence, and injustice, and the approbation of "benevolence to some preferably to others," he must have seen that all kinds of evil consequences would follow, if we did not condemn the one and approve the other. Men, of course, are constantly approving or condemning acts, without expressly thinking of their effects on the general happiness, and it is most desirable that we should, in practice, be able to have recourse to minor or intermediate rules of conduct, such as those of veracity, fidelity, justice, &c.; but the question is whether, on reflection, the moralist, or indeed any normally-constituted man, ever approves of any action which he believes likely to bring about more harm than good, and whether any clearer, more intelligible, and more universally applicable principle of conduct can be proposed than that of promoting the general welfare. To make the conscience, as Butler does, a law to itself, is to substitute for a general and reasonable rule of conduct a particular and arbitrary one.

This Dissertation contains a curious misrepresentation, of course wholly unintentional, of the theory which it is attacking. "It is certain," the author says, "that some of the most shocking instances of injustice, adultery, murder, perjury, and even of persecution, may, in many supposable cases, not have the appearance of being likely to produce an overbalance of misery in the present state; perhaps sometimes may have the contrary appearance." But no moralist has ever deliberately maintained that the test of consequences is a sufficient one, when applied to individual actions, considered wholly in themselves; actions must be tested as a class, and we must consider what would happen, not if we did this or that act, but if acts of this or that kind were generally prevalent.

*Alfred Russel Wallace*

Mr. Sidgwick<sup>2</sup> thinks that we may take Butler's Dissertation as the earliest treatise "in the development of English ethics, in which what were afterwards called 'utilitarian' and 'intuitional' morality were first formally opposed." The passage from Balguy, quoted on pp. 217-18, is sufficient to show that this statement requires some modification. But Mr. Sidgwick is quite right, I think, when he draws a distinction between the different points of view with which Butler regards the relation of virtue to happiness in the Sermons and the Dissertation respectively. "In the Sermons," he says, "Butler seems to treat conscience and calm benevolence as permanently allied though distinct principles, but in the Dissertation on Virtue he maintains that the conduct dictated by conscience will often differ widely from that to which mere regard for the production of happiness would prompt." Indeed there are occasional, though, it must be acknowledged, exceptional passages in the Sermons, in which Butler seems to adopt the benevolent, or, as we should now call it, with a slight difference of connotation, the utilitarian theory of morals, without any qualification or reservation. Such are the following. "That mankind is a community, that we all stand in a relation to each other, that there is a public end and interest of society which each particular is obliged to promote, is the sum of morals."<sup>3</sup> "It is manifest that nothing can be of consequence to mankind or any creature, but happiness. This then is all which any person can, in strictness of speaking, be said to have a right to. We can, therefore, owe no man anything, but only to further and promote his happiness, according to our abilities. And, therefore, a disposition and endeavour to do good to all with whom we have to do, in the degree and manner which the different

<sup>2</sup> Essay on Ethics in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

<sup>3</sup> Sermon IX.

relations we stand in to them require, is a discharge of all the obligations we are under to them.”<sup>4</sup> One of the very reasons, perhaps, which has made this moralist so popular is the fact that, from the want of system and consistency in his writings, he is able to reflect so many phases of ethical sentiment.<sup>5</sup>

The most elaborate criticism of Hutcheson’s ethical theories was that offered by Dr. Richard Price in his *Review of the Principal Questions in Morals*, first published in 1757, but considerably altered in the third edition, published in 1787. Price proceeds generally on the same grounds as Burnet and Balguy, but the intrinsic value of his work is incomparably greater than that of theirs. Instead of being a mere criticism of another author’s opinions, it becomes, as the argument advances, a substantive work on ethical theory of very considerable merit. In fact, of the various writings of what has been called the “Rational School” of English Moralists Price’s treatise is undoubtedly the most important, and it is specially interesting on account of the close similarity which obtains between many of the theories and even expressions contained in it and those which subsequently became so celebrated in the Practical Philosophy of Kant. The main positions propounded in this work may be summed up under three heads. First, actions are *in themselves* right or wrong. What is meant by the expression “in themselves” is by no means clear; for it can hardly mean that actions are right or wrong irrespectively of the circumstances under which they

<sup>4</sup> Sermon XII.

<sup>5</sup> Even in his later work, the Analogy, there occurs a passage as distinctly utilitarian in its character, as could well be written. “God instructs us by experience (for it is not reason, but experience, which instructs us) what good or bad consequences will follow from our acting in such and such manners; and by this He directs us how we are to behave ourselves.” Pt. II., ch. 5.

are performed. From a comparison of various passages, it would seem as if Price intended by this phrase to exclude all reference to consequences as well as to intimate that the perceptions of right and wrong in actions are identical in the case of all intelligent beings. The perception of right and wrong, he may be taken as saying, does not depend on any special constitution of human nature, nor, in pronouncing any action to be right or wrong, have we any occasion to trace consequences or to look beyond the action itself. The second position is that right and wrong are simple ideas, incapable of analysis or definition; in other words, they cannot be resolved, as so many previous moralists, including Shaftesbury and Hutcheson, had resolved them, into ideas of good and evil. "If we will consider why it is right to conform ourselves to the relations in which persons and objects stand to us; we shall find ourselves obliged to terminate our views in a simple perception, and something ultimately approved for which no justifying reason can be assigned."<sup>6</sup> Thirdly, these simple ideas of Right and Wrong are perceived immediately by the intuitive power of the Reason or Understanding, terms which he employs indifferently, just in the same way that colour is perceived by the eye or sound by the ear. Hutcheson also regards our moral perceptions as immediate, but Price maintains against him, in an elaborate course of argument, that the faculty thus immediately perceiving moral qualities is the Reason, and not a Sense. By the Reason he, of course, means, as Cudworth does, when using the word in the same connexion, the so-called intuitive, and not the discursive Reason or faculty of comparison. As for the emotions, they are the source of all vicious actions, though, when enlightened by reason, they may also aid in the production of virtuous conduct. The author fails to see that the

<sup>6</sup> Price's *Review*, &c., ch. 6.

emotions are, in the last analysis, the original source of all conduct, be it virtuous or vicious.

Two years after the appearance of Price's work, Dr. John Taylor of Norwich,<sup>7</sup> a Presbyterian minister of considerable reputation in his day, published a short pamphlet, entitled "An Examination of the Scheme of Morality advanced by Dr. Hutcheson." Dr. Taylor exaggerates, and indeed does not very clearly understand, Hutcheson's position. His own theory seems to coincide pretty nearly with that of Price, though the Reason, which is "the principal in the affair of virtue," appears to be the discursive, and not, as in the systems of Price and Cudworth, the intuitive reason. Reason not only devises the means, but proposes the end. Virtue consists, not in following any instincts, or in aiming at any consequences, but "in acting faithfully according to what we know of the true natures of objects, persons, things, actions, relations, and circumstances duly considered and attended to." A "sketch" of his own system, in which he borrows largely from Wollaston and Price, was published by Taylor in 1760.

Passing from Hutcheson's critics to those of his successors, in the line of English Moralists, on whom he may be supposed to have exerted any influence, the first name which arrests our attention is that of Hume. That part of Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature* (vol. iii.), which is concerned with morals, was first published in 1740. The *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*, which is at once more popular and more matured than the earlier work, appeared in 1751. Both these writings betray the most evident marks of Hutcheson's influence.<sup>8</sup> The very first section of the Book on Morals, in

<sup>7</sup> Dr. Taylor's descendants are frequently mentioned in Crabb Robinson's diary.

<sup>8</sup> In saying this, I do not, of course, mean to imply that they were not



the *Treatise*, is devoted to show that "Moral distinctions are not derived from Reason." "Morals excite passions, and produce or prevent actions. Reason of itself is utterly impotent in this particular." "Moral distinctions are not the offspring of reason. Reason is wholly inactive, and can never be the source of so active a principle as conscience, or a sense of morals." To the admirable passages in the *Enquiry* in which Hume assigns to reason and sentiment their respective parts in determining or estimating moral conduct, I have already referred in my account of Shaftesbury.<sup>9</sup> I shall here quote a few sentences, which will serve both to illustrate his position and also to show his superiority, in respect of clearness and force of expression, to most of his predecessors in this branch of philosophy. "I am apt to suspect . . . that reason and sentiment concur in almost all moral determinations and conclusions. The final sentence, it is probable, which pronounces characters and actions amiable or odious, praiseworthy or blameable; that which stamps on them the mark of honour or infamy, approbation or censure; that which renders morality an active principle, and constitutes virtue our happiness, and vice our misery: it is probable, I say, that this final sentence depends on some internal sense or feeling, which nature has made universal in the whole species. For what else can have an influence of this nature? But in order to pave the way for such a sentiment, and give a proper discernment of its object, it is often necessary, we find, that much reasoning should precede, that nice distinctions be made, just conclusions drawn, distant comparisons formed, complicated also largely influenced by Shaftesbury, whose writings would, in some respects, probably commend themselves to Hume more than those of Hutcheson. Minor traces of Shaftesbury's influence are to be found in Hume's peculiar use of the words "taste" and "relish," and in his frequent comparisons of moral with natural beauty.

<sup>9</sup> See p. 166.

relations examined, and general facts fixed and ascertained.”<sup>1</sup> In the *Treatise*, Hume calls this sentiment “a moral sense,” and devotes his second section to showing that “moral distinctions are derived from a moral sense.” But in the *Enquiry*, so far as I can recollect, this phrase never occurs, and indeed, from the circuitous expressions which he sometimes employs, it would seem as if he purposely avoided it. I think it is tolerably plain that, instead of recognizing a distinct and original faculty in the “Moral Sense,” Hume regarded moral approbation and disapprobation as arising simply from the satisfaction or disappointment of our sympathetic feelings. Thus, he speaks of “conduct gaining my approbation by touching my humanity,” and of “humanity making a distinction in favour of those actions which are useful and beneficial.”<sup>2</sup> And, at the end of the *Treatise on Human Nature*, he says expressly: “Those who resolve the sense of morals into original instincts of the human mind may defend the cause of virtue with sufficient authority; but want the advantage which those possess, who account for that sense by an extensive sympathy with mankind.” I suppose the approbation and disapprobation which we accord to our own acts would be explained, on this theory, by supposing us to transfer to ourselves the feelings with which we have been accustomed to regard the acts of others.

Hume agreeing with Hutcheson in regarding the final act of moral approbation as emotional, it follows almost as a matter of course that he agrees with him also in referring the suggestion of our ultimate ends to the desires, and not to the reason. “It appears evident that the ultimate ends of human actions can never, in any case, be accounted for by reason, but recommend themselves entirely to the sentiments and

<sup>1</sup> *Enquiry*, &c., Section I.

<sup>2</sup> *Enquiry*, Section I., Appendix I.

affections of mankind, without any dependence on the intellectual faculties. Ask a man, why he uses exercises; he will answer, because he desires to keep his health. If you then inquire, why he desires health, he will readily reply, because sickness is painful. If you push your inquiry farther, and desire a reason why he hates pain, it is impossible he can ever give any. This is an ultimate end, and is never referred to any other object.”<sup>3</sup>

The test or criterion of actions, we have seen, is, with Hutcheson, their tendency to promote or retard the public good. “The greatest happiness of the greatest number” is the formula by which he expresses the end which the virtuous agent ought to have in view. Hume, though he devotes a much larger proportion of his treatise to a discussion of the qualities which we praise and blame in actions, proposes no equally definite rule of conduct. The circumstance common to all the objects of our approbation, he conceives, is the fact that they are regarded as being either useful or agreeable either to ourselves or others. A little reflection will show that this statement admits of a much more simple expression. The agreeable is that which affords immediate pleasure. The useful is that which, in its ultimate effects, either diminishes pain or augments pleasure. Directly or indirectly, they both contribute to the same result. The one circumstance, therefore, which merits approbation, might be described as the fact of conducing to the happiness either of ourselves or of others. But, in those very numerous cases where our own happiness comes into competition with that of our fellow-creatures, Hume’s system appears to offer no guidance other than the predominant sentiment at the moment of action. As, however, according to the genius of his philosophy, that sentiment ought to be a sympathetic one, the virtuous man would

<sup>3</sup> Enquiry, Appendix I.

always be predisposed to sacrifice himself to others rather than others to himself.

The prudential virtues are fully recognized in Hume's scheme of *Morals*. The reason why we admire them, and why, therefore, we account them virtues, is that they promote the happiness of their possessors, which is "not a spectacle entirely indifferent to us," but which, "like sunshine or the prospect of well-cultivated plains, communicates a secret joy and satisfaction."<sup>4</sup> The fact that these qualities are esteemed and praised thus affords a new illustration of the sympathetic character of human nature.

Like Hutcheson and Butler, Hume does not recognize any original principles of malevolence. "Absolute, unprovoked, disinterested malice has never, perhaps, place in any human breast."<sup>5</sup>

There is one respect in which Hume's treatment of morals marks so great an advance as that of his predecessors, that, even in this brief notice, it ought not to be passed over in silence. In drawing attention to the wide variation of moral sentiment existing in different ages and countries, and by his inductive investigation of the acts and qualities which men approve, he initiated that comparative and historical method of treating moral and social questions which has since thrown so much light on the origin and growth both of morality and society. Preceding moralists (though we ought, to a certain extent, to except Locke) took the average men of their own age and country as typical of all men. Hume recognized that, though the fundamental constitution of human nature is the same, all the world over, it may be affected by such differences of external circumstances as to assume the most various forms and result in the most divergent sentiments. This diversity in

<sup>4</sup> Enquiry, Section 6.

<sup>5</sup> Section 5.

the acts and opinions of men does not, however, prevent the moralist from determining what, under any given circumstances is the best course of action.

Adam Smith, who had been a pupil, and was subsequently, after a brief interval, during which the chair was occupied by a Mr. Thomas Craigie, the successor of Hutcheson at Glasgow, published his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* in 1759. In this work, he speaks in highly laudatory terms of his old master. After enumerating various authors who have made virtue to consist in benevolence, he says: "But of all the patrons of this system, ancient or modern, the late Dr. Hutcheson was undoubtedly, beyond all comparison, the most acute, the most distinct, the most philosophical, and, what is of the greatest consequence of all, the soberest and most judicious."<sup>6</sup> This "amiable system" did not, however, wholly commend itself to Adam Smith himself. While according the highest place to the "supreme virtue of beneficence," he pleads that the inferior qualities of prudence, vigilance, temperance, economy, industry, and the like, which are "apprehended to deserve the esteem and approbation of everybody," should at least be admitted into the rank of virtues.

In Part VII., Sect. 3, Ch. 3, Adam Smith expressly examines Hutcheson's theory of a Moral Sense, and rejects it as a superfluous assumption. Moral approbation, he maintains, is not the result of a peculiar sentiment, answering one particular purpose and no other, but may be fully accounted for by the familiar feeling of Sympathy. We must not indeed limit sympathy, as Hume did, to sympathy with the happiness of those who are affected by the action. This is included, but it is only one of the directions which, in experiencing the feeling of approbation, our sympathy takes. "When we approve of any character or action, the sentiments

<sup>6</sup> Part VII., Sect. 2, ch. 3.

which we feel are derived from four sources, which are, in some respects, different from one another. First, we sympathize with the motives of the agent; secondly, we enter into the gratitude of those who receive the benefit of his actions; thirdly, we observe that his conduct has been agreeable to the general rules by which those two sympathies generally act; and, last of all, when we consider such actions, as making a part of a system of behaviour which tends to promote the happiness either of the individual or of the society, they appear to derive a beauty from this utility, not unlike that which we ascribe to any well-contrived machine." The approbation we bestow upon our own acts arises from a kind of inverted sympathy. We place ourselves in the position of an impartial spectator, and, "viewing our own conduct with his eyes and from his station," we "enter into and sympathize with the sentiments and motives which influenced it." "We can never survey our own sentiments and motives, we can never form any judgment concerning them, unless we remove ourselves, as it were, from our own natural station, and endeavour to view them as at a certain distance from us. But we can do this in no other way than by endeavouring to view them with the eyes of other people, or as other people are likely to view them."<sup>7</sup> These elaborate explanations seem to be all open to the objection that the processes described, when they occur at all, precede the act of approbation, which is consequent upon them, and not identical with them. To sympathize with a man, to enter into his feelings and motives, generally leads to our approving of his conduct, but surely the two emotions are quite distinct. Hutcheson's conception of a Moral Sense, as an original and independent part of human nature, involves a needless multiplication of principles, besides being open to other objections which have been already

<sup>7</sup> Part III., ch. 1.

stated in the course of this work, but the supposition which seems best to accord with facts is that we are capable of acquiring a reflex feeling, gradually formed by the interaction and combination of the various sympathetic and self-regarding emotions, and constantly enlightened by the Reason, to which we may not inappropriately give the specific name of the Moral Faculty, the Conscience, or even, providing we bear in mind its origin, the Moral Sense. It may be remarked that, though Adam Smith rejects Hutcheson's theory of the Moral Sense, it is pretty plain that his own theory of Sympathy is intimately connected with the benevolent aspect under which Hutcheson had attempted to represent what others have so often regarded as the austere forms of Virtue and Duty.

It is almost superfluous to say that Adam Smith agrees with Hutcheson and Shaftesbury in regarding the benevolent feelings as incapable of analysis into self-love, or, to adopt his own expression, as "original passions of human nature."<sup>8</sup> The position, also common to him with them, that our ultimate ends, and, consequently, our first impulses to right action, are given, not by reason, but by the affections, is stated with great force and perspicuity. "Though reason is undoubtedly the source of the general rules of morality, and of all the moral judgments which we form by means of them, it is altogether absurd and unintelligible to suppose that the first perceptions of right and wrong can be derived from reason, even in those particular cases upon the experience of which the general rules are formed. . . . Reason may show that this object is the means of obtaining some other which is naturally either pleasing or displeasing, and in this manner may render it either agreeable or disagreeable, for the sake of something else. But nothing can be agreeable or disagreeable for its own sake,

<sup>8</sup> Part I., Sect. 1, ch. 1.

which is not rendered such by immediate sense and feeling. If virtue, therefore, in every particular instance, necessarily pleases for its own sake, and if vice as certainly displeases the mind, it cannot be reason, but immediate sense and feeling, which in this manner reconciles us to the one and alienates us from the other." "Dr. Hutcheson," he adds, "had the merit of being the first who distinguished, with any degree of precision, in what respect all moral distinctions may be said to arise from reason, and in what respect they are founded upon immediate sense and feeling."<sup>9</sup>

Adam Smith curiously adopts two criteria of actions, their propriety and their merit. "The sentiment or affection of the heart, from which any action proceeds, and upon which its whole virtue or vice must ultimately depend, may be considered under two different aspects, or in two different relations: first, in relation to the cause which excites it, or the motive which gives occasion to it; and, secondly, in relation to the end which it proposes, or the effect which it tends to produce. In the suitableness or unsuitableness, in the proportion or disproportion, which the affection seems to bear to the cause or object which excites it, consists the propriety or impropriety, the decency or ungracefulness, of the consequent action. In the beneficial or hurtful effects which the affection aims at, or tends to produce, consists the merit or demerit of the action, the qualities by which it is entitled to reward, or is deserving of punishment."<sup>1</sup> It does not require much penetration to see that the two criteria, here proposed, really coincide. For, how are we to determine "the suitableness or unsuitableness, the proportion or disproportion, which the affection seems to bear to the cause or object which excites it," except by some external signs, and what external signs are

<sup>9</sup> Part VII., Sect. 3, ch. 2.

<sup>1</sup> Part I., Sect. 1, ch. 3.



there, on which we can place any reliance, except the "effects which the affection aims at"? A man experiences, say, the affection of resentment. The affection was excited by an act of injustice, and it issues in an act of punishment. Now, if we approve of the punishment, its *merit*, according to this theory, consists in the fact that it is *beneficial*; its *propriety* in the fact that the feeling of resentment, from which it proceeds, is *suitable* or *proportional* to the act of injustice which excited it. But how are we to determine the suitability or proportion of the feeling, except by the acts in which it results or to which, by gestures or other external signs, it points? It may be true that, at first, the agent exhibited more or less of the feeling of resentment than we considered to be justified by the circumstances, or than guided his subsequent action. But then, if we condemn the feeling at this stage, it is simply because of the conduct which would result from it, were it at once to be acted upon. And suppose it to be said that we often praise the man who exhibits consistently the same degree of feeling rather than the man whose feelings oscillate, even though the same conduct ultimately results in both cases, the reason surely is that, in the one case, we can always calculate on a right course of action, whereas, in the other, the character of the action may vary according to the particular moment at which it happens to be performed. To estimate the relation of feelings, at least of other persons' feelings, to their exciting causes, in any other way than by the actions which they produce or by the gestures or other signs, indicative of approaching action, which they exhibit, seems to me impossible. Thus, when closely examined, Adam Smith's two criteria can be reduced to the one criterion proposed by Hutcheson, that is, as it was afterwards called, the utilitarian test or standard of conduct.

Reid and Stewart recurred, though with various qualifica-

tions, to the ethical teaching represented by Cudworth, Clarke, and Price. They do not object to the expression "Moral Sense," provided that faculty be understood to be not simply emotional, but the source of ultimate moral truths. Indeed, as Sir William Hamilton says, the Moral Sense or Moral Faculty of these writers does not differ essentially from the "Practical Reason" of Kant. They always speak respectfully of Hutcheson, but their ethical theories can hardly be said to have been influenced by his. On their relation to him, in the sphere of mental philosophy, I spoke in the last chapter.

Dr. Thomas Brown, once a highly popular writer, though now seldom read except by professed students of the History of Philosophy, agrees with Hutcheson's theory of the Moral Sense, so far as to maintain that "we come into existence with certain susceptibilities of emotion, in consequence of which it is impossible for us, in after-life, but for the influence of counteracting circumstances, momentary or permanent, not to be pleased with the contemplation of certain actions, as soon as they have become fully known to us, and not to have feelings of disgust on the contemplation of certain other actions."<sup>2</sup> He objects, however, to the expression "Moral Sense," as implying more than emotions, and suggesting the analogy of the perceptions or sensations attendant on the exercise of our external senses. "The moral emotions," he rightly says, "are more akin to love or hate, than to perception or judgment." His own account of the part taken by the "moral principle" in our estimate of actions seems eminently just. "It is not the moral principle which sees the agent, and all the circumstances of his action, or which sees the happiness or misery that has flowed from it; but when these are seen, and all the motives of the agent divined,

<sup>2</sup> Lectures on the Philosophy of the Human Mind, Lecture lxxiv.

it is the moral principle of our nature which then affords the emotion that may afterwards, in our conception, be added to these ideas derived from other sources, and form with them compound notions of all the varieties of actions that are classed by us as forms of virtue or vice.”<sup>3</sup> On the vague and loose way in which Hutcheson employs the word “sense” I have already had occasion to speak. But his conception of the “Moral Sense,” I take it, is more analogous to that of the “Public Sense,” that is, “our determination to be pleased with the happiness of others, and to be uneasy at their misery,”<sup>4</sup> than it is to that of the external senses; in other words, though he does not distinguish with sufficient precision between emotions and ideas, his conception of the Moral Sense is more that of an emotional than of a perceptive faculty. His system would, however, have been far clearer, as well as truer to facts, had he more carefully discriminated between the ultimate feeling of approbation or disapprobation and the complicated intellectual processes which often precede it.<sup>5</sup>

Brown agrees with Hutcheson in maintaining the disinterested character of the benevolent affections, though he emphatically repudiates the theory that “whatever is felt by us to be virtuous is felt to deserve that name merely as involving some benevolent desire.”<sup>6</sup>

To go back to two earlier writers,—Paley and Bentham, though they reject, the latter with scorn, the idea of an original moral sense,<sup>7</sup> both agree in adopting the tendency to

<sup>3</sup> Lecture lxxxii. This lecture is well worth the close attention of any student of Moral Philosophy.

<sup>4</sup> Hutcheson on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions, Sect. 1.

<sup>5</sup> See my remarks on this subject at the beginning of ch. 2.

<sup>6</sup> Lecture lxxxvi.

<sup>7</sup> See Paley's *Moral and Political Philosophy*, Bk. I., ch. 5; Bentham's *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, ch. 2.

promote happiness as the ultimate test of action. Neither of them seems to have been familiar with the works of Hutcheson, and indeed what may be called the psychological questions of ethics, such as the origin of the moral sentiments and the nature of the moral faculty, appear to have possessed no interest for them. Their object was almost exclusively to determine specific duties, and hence an intelligible criterion of actions, easily capable of application, was all that they asked from the theory of ethics. Such a criterion they found in what has been called the eudæmonistic or "greatest happiness" principle, and the body of their works is occupied in testing by it received maxims of conduct, or deducing from it general rules of action. It is curious that the earliest shape in which Bentham stated the utilitarian formula was in the very words of Hutcheson, "The greatest happiness of the greatest number," for which he afterwards substituted the simpler expression, "The greatest happiness."<sup>8</sup> Bentham, as is well known, included the lower animals among the objects of moral action. It is a point of similarity that Hutcheson not infrequently speaks of "sensitive natures"<sup>9</sup> as the recipients of those pleasures which it is the duty of the virtuous man to diffuse.

In France, Hutcheson's writings do not appear to have attracted much attention, though the *Essays on Beauty and Virtue* were translated into French in 1749, and the posthumous work, *A System of Moral Philosophy*, in 1770.

And yet Bentham constantly assumes that we have a natural disposition to take a pleasure in promoting the happiness of others, and, consequently, a natural tendency to approve of beneficent action. So far, therefore, as it is simply emotional, he virtually recognizes an original moral sense.

<sup>8</sup> See Mr. Burton's Introduction to Bentham's Works, Bowring's Edition, Vol i., pp. 17, 18.

<sup>9</sup> See, for instance, Illustrations upon the Moral Sense, Sects. 4, 6.

A recent writer, Jouffroy, places Hutcheson at the head of those authors, amongst whom he includes Butler, who advocated the theory of a moral sense.<sup>1</sup> "Butler was a preacher, and Shaftesbury a man of the world, while Hutcheson was a metaphysician by profession. It is not remarkable, therefore, that the doctrine, which the two former merely indicated, should have received from the latter a full development under a precise and philosophic form. Shaftesbury and Butler suggested the idea, Hutcheson formed the system, of the moral sense." Cousin, in his *Cours d'Histoire de la Philosophie Morale du XVIIIème Siècle*, devotes two lectures to an examination of Hutcheson's system, of which, though, of course, differing from it, he speaks with great respect.

Hettner<sup>2</sup> tells us that the teaching of the early Scottish philosophers, of whom Hutcheson may be regarded as the chief, so thoroughly represented the spirit of the age that, when it passed over into Germany, it penetrated not only into the sermons, but even into the catechisms and children's books (*Kinderfreunde*) of the rationalizing divines of that period. The writers, through whose instrumentality it was mainly propagated, were Abbt (who wrote a book on *Merit*), Garve, and Mendelssohn. The four essays, he further tells us, were several times translated into German. It may be added, as a striking proof of the popularity of Hutcheson and the Scottish philosophy in Germany, at that time, that the

<sup>1</sup> Jouffroy's *Lectures on the Introduction to Ethics*, translated by Channing (Boston, 1860), Lecture xix.

<sup>2</sup> *Literaturgeschichte des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts*, Erster Theil. Much detailed information on the relation of Hutcheson, as well as Shaftesbury, to various German Philosophers of the eighteenth century, will be found in a recent monograph, "Einfluss der englischen Philosophen seit Bacon auf die deutsche Philosophie des 18 Jahrhunderts," by G. Zart, Berlin, 1881.

*System of Moral Philosophy* was translated into German in 1756, the very year after its appearance at Glasgow. An entirely different turn, however, was soon to be given to the ethical philosophy of Germany by Kant, who, pursuing the principles already rendered familiar in England by Cudworth, Clarke, and Price, attempted to construct a system of morals on a purely intellectual basis. All ethical ideas, according to Kant, have their origin and seat altogether *à priori* in reason; they are not susceptible of explanation upon any *à posteriori* system; and the reason from which they and the laws of morality are derived must be the pure or naked reason, not the particular human reason, but reason as such, abstractedly and apart from the nature of man.<sup>3</sup> There is indeed a moral feeling, but it never operates antecedently to the reason, and indeed is produced solely by reason. It is simply a capacity of taking an interest in the law or reverence for the law itself, and cannot be reckoned either as pleasure or pain.<sup>4</sup> This moral feeling, it need hardly be said, has little relation to the moral sense of Hutcheson. Of later German philosophers the only one who bears any affinity to Hutcheson is Jacobi, in the earlier period of his speculative activity.

Hutcheson's principal contributions to the subsequent development of moral philosophy (and to ethics, as representing the main stream of his influence, I have thought it best to confine myself in the present chapter) may be briefly summed up under four heads. First, his writings must have powerfully aided the tendency to detach ethics from theology, and to treat questions of morality as an independent branch of

<sup>3</sup> *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten* (Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Ethics), Zweiter Abschnitt (2nd Section).

<sup>4</sup> *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, Erstes Buch, Drittes Hauptstück. (Analytic of the Practical Reason, Bk. I., ch. 3).

investigation, capable of a methodical and scientific handling. Hutcheson's professional and ecclesiastical position was calculated to lend great weight to his example in a matter of this kind; and though Butler was, at the same time, virtually pursuing the same method, it was less patent to his readers that he was doing so. Another mode in which Hutcheson, like Shaftesbury, powerfully contributed to a sounder treatment of the problems of ethics was by laying a psychological basis for the science. The ultimate difficulties in these inquiries, such as the origin of moral distinctions and the nature of moral obligation, he saw could only be solved by a careful examination of the human mind. Such an examination requires, of course, to be supplemented by a historical survey of society, in all its varieties and stages, and, as this branch of the investigation is wanting in Hutcheson, his results are necessarily imperfect. But the study of moral action in reference to the constitution of the human mind at all, however limited the area from which the instances were taken, was a great and decided advance on the merely arbitrary procedure of most of the earlier moralists. More specifically, the psychological analysis of the mental processes preceding action, as well as the less successful attempt to analyze the act of moral approbation or disapprobation, formed most important contributions to the subsequent discussion of the question on the exact relations between the operations of the reason and the emotions in our moral acts. And lastly, Hutcheson did more than, perhaps, any preceding moralist towards supplying an adequate expression for the moral criterion of actions, affections, and characters. His writings, together with those of Shaftesbury and Hume, undoubtedly paved the way for the general reception, towards the end of the century, of what is now called Utilitarianism. Whether that theory provides a sufficient guide and test of action will.

always, perhaps, be open to some dispute. But it cannot be questioned, I think, that Hutcheson occupies an important place in its history.

Shaftesbury and Hutcheson do not stand in the first rank of philosophers. Neither in the roll of fame nor in that of merit, do they compete with Bacon, Hobbes, Locke, Bérkeley, Hume, Descartes, Spinoza, or Kant. But, in the history of literature and philosophy, as in that of war and politics, posterity is often unjust to names of secondary importance, and is apt to pass over considerable services, because the recollection of them is not associated with that of illustrious persons. In the foregoing pages I have endeavoured to repair this injustice in the case of two of our own countrymen, without whose intervention the development of at least one branch of philosophy in England might have been deprived of many of the most characteristic features which we now recognize in it.

THE END.



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